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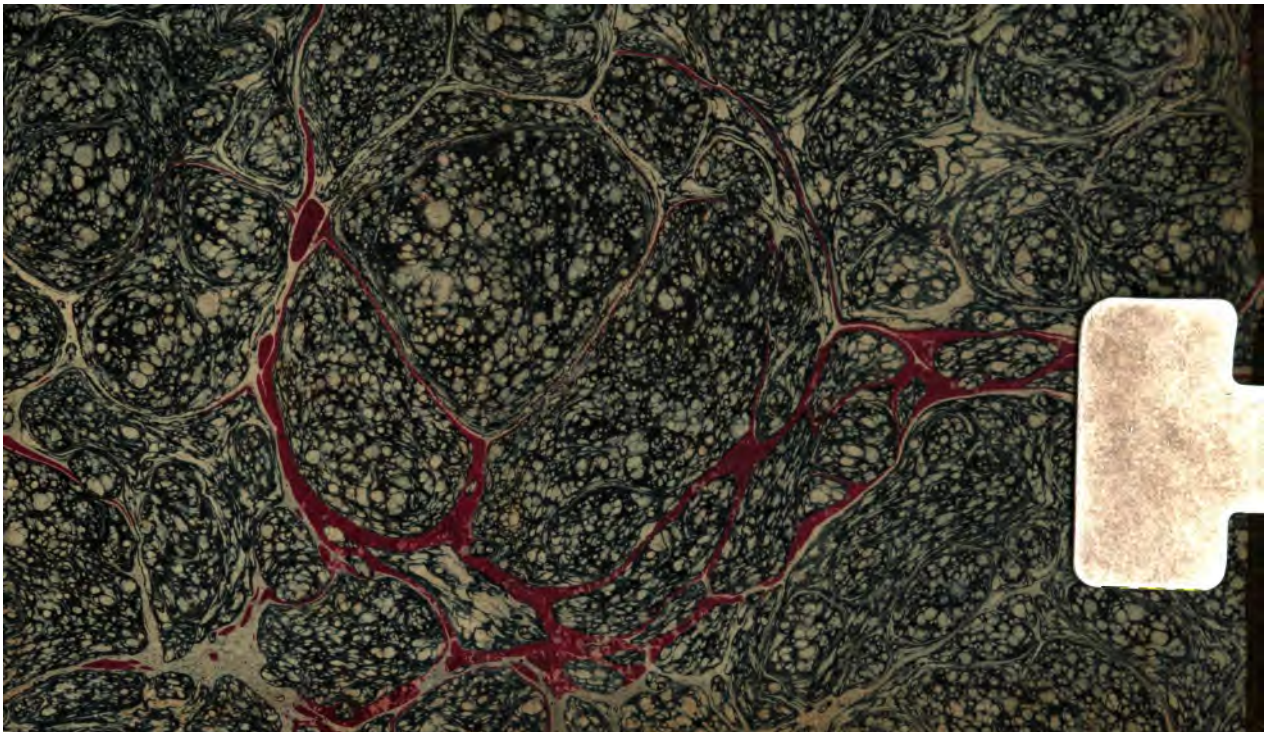

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CECILIA:

OR,

MEMOIRS OF AN HEIRESS.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

EVELINA.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

THE EIGHTH EDITION.

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THE indulgence shewn by the Public to EVELINA, which, unpatronized, unaided, and unowned, past through Four Editions in one Year, has encouraged its Author to risk this SECOND attempt. The animation of success is too universally acknowledged, to make the writer of the following sheets dread much censure of temerity; though the precariousness of any power to give pleasure, suppresses all vanity of confidence, and sends CECILIA into the world with scarce more hope, though far more encouragement, than attended her highly-honoured predecessor, EVELINA.

JULY, 1782.

CECILIA.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

A JOURNEY.

"PEACE to the spirits of my honoured parents, respected be their remains, and immortalized their virtues! may time while it moulders their frail relicks to dust, commit to tradition the record of their goodness! and oh may their orphan descendant be influenced through life by the remembrance of their purity, and in death be solaced, that by her it was unsullied!"

Such was the secret prayer with which the only survivor of the Beverley family quitted the abode of her youth, and residence of her forefathers; while tears of recollecting sorrow filled her eyes, and obstructed the last view of her native town which had excited them.

Cecilia, this fair traveller, had lately entered into the one-and-twentieth year of her age. Her ancestors had been rich farmers in the county of Suffolk, though her father, in whom a spirit of elegance had supplanted the rapacity of wealth, had spent his time as a private country gentleman, satisfied, without increasing his store, to live upon what he inherited from the labours of his predecessors. She had lost him in her early youth, and her mother had not long survived him. They had bequeathed to her 10,000 *l.* and consigned her to the care of the Dean of ——, her uncle. With this gentleman, in whom, by various contingencies, the accumulated possessions of a rising and prosperous family were centred, she had passed the last four years of her life; and a few weeks only had yet elapsed since his death, which, by depriving her of her last relation, made her heiress to an estate of 3,000 *l.* per annum; with no other restriction than that of annexing her name, if she married, to the disposal of her hand and her riches.

But though thus largely indebted to fortune, to nature she had yet greater obligations: her form was elegant, her heart was liberal; her countenance announced the intelligence of her mind, her complexion varied with every emotion of her soul, and her eyes, the heralds of her speech, now beamed with

with understanding, and now glistened with sensibility.

For the short period of her minority, the management of her fortune, and the care of her person, had been entrusted by the Dean to three guardians, among whom her own choice was to settle her residence: but her mind, saddened by the loss of all her natural friends, coveted to regain its serenity in the quietness of the country, and in the bosom of an aged and maternal counsellor, whom she loved as her mother, and to whom she had been known from her childhood.

The Deanery, indeed, she was obliged to relinquish, a long repining expectant being eager, by entering it, to bequeath to another the anxiety and suspence he had suffered himself, though probably without much impatience to shorten their duration in favour of the next successor; but the house of Mrs. Charlton, her benevolent friend, was open for her reception, and the alleviating tenderness of her conversation took from her all wish of changing it.

Here she had dwelt since the interment of her uncle; and here, from the affectionate gratitude of her disposition, she had perhaps been content to dwell till her own, had not her guardians interfered to remove her.

Reluctantly she complied; she quitted her early companions, the friend she most revered,

and the spot which contained the relicks of all she had yet lived to lament; and, accompanied by one of her guardians, and attended by two servants, she began her journey from Bury to London.

Mr. Harrel, this gentleman, though in the prime of his life, though gay, fashionable, and splendid, had been appointed by her uncle to be one of her trustees; a choice which had for object the peculiar gratification of his niece, whose most favourite young friend Mr. Harrel had married, and in whose house he therefore knew she would most wish to live.

Whatever good-nature could dictate or politeness suggest to dispel her melancholy, Mr. Harrel failed not to urge; and Cecilia, in whose disposition sweetness was tempered with dignity, and gentleness with fortitude, suffered not his kind offices to seem ineffectual; she kissed her hand at the last glimpse a friendly hill afforded of her native town, and made an effort to forget the regret with which she lost sight of it. She revived her spirits by plans of future happiness, dwelt upon the delight with which she should meet her young friend, and, by accepting his consolation, amply rewarded his trouble.

Her serenity, however, had yet another, though milder trial to undergo, since another friend was yet to be met, and another farewel was yet to be taken.

At

At the distance of seven miles from Bury resided Mr. Monckton, the richest and most powerful man in that neighbourhood, at whose house Cecilia and her guardian were invited to breakfast in their journey.

Mr. Monckton, who was the younger son of a noble family, was a man of parts, information, and sagacity; to great native strength of mind he added a penetrating knowledge of the world, and to faculties the most skilful of investigating the character of every other, a dissimulation the most profound in concealing his own. In the bloom of his youth, impatient for wealth and ambitious of power, he had tied himself to a rich dowager of quality, whose age, though sixty-seven, was but among the smaller species of her evil properties, her disposition being far more repulsive than her wrinkles. An inequality of years so considerable, had led him to expect that the fortune he had thus acquired, would speedily be released from the burden with which it was at present incumbered; but his expectations proved as vain as they were mercenary, and his lady was not more the dupe of his protestations, than he was himself of his own purposes. Ten years he had been married to her, yet her health was good, and her faculties were unimpaired; eagerly he had watched for her dissolution, yet his eagerness had injured no health but his own. So short-

sighted is selfish cunning, that in aiming no further than at the gratification of the present moment, it obscures the evils of the future, while it impedes the perception of integrity and honour.

His ardour, however, to attain the blest period of returning liberty, deprived him neither of spirit nor inclination for intermediate enjoyment; he knew the world too well to incur its censure by ill-treating the woman to whom he was indebted for the rank he held in it; he saw her, indeed, but seldom, yet he had the decency, alike in avoiding as in meeting her, to shew no abatement of civility and good-breeding: but, having thus sacrificed to ambition all possibility of happiness in domestic life, he turned his thoughts to those other methods of procuring it, which he had so dearly purchased the power of essaying.

The resources of pleasure to the possessors of wealth are only to be cut off by the satiety of which they are productive: a satiety which the vigorous mind of Mr. Monckton had not yet suffered him to experience; his time, therefore, was either devoted to the expensive amusements of the metropolis, or spent in the country among the gayest of its diversions.

The little knowledge of fashionable manners, and of the characters of the times of which Cecilia was yet mistress, she had gathered

thered at the house of this gentleman, with whom the Dean her uncle had been intimately connected: for as he preserved to the world the same appearance of decency he supported to his wife, he was every where well received, and being but partially known, was extremely respected: the world, with its wonted facility, repaying his circumspect attention to its laws, by silencing the voice of censure, guarding his character from impeachment, and his name from reproach.

Cecilia had been known to him half her life; she had been caressed in his house as a beautiful child, and her presence was now solicited there as an amiable acquaintance. Her visits, indeed, had by no means been frequent, as the ill-humour of Lady Margaret Monckton had rendered them painful to her: yet the opportunities they had afforded her of mixing with people of fashion, had served to prepare her for the new scenes in which she was soon to be a performer.

Mr. Monckton, in return, had always been a welcome guest at the Deanery; his conversation was to Cecilia a never-failing source of information, as his knowledge of life and manners enabled him to start those subjects of which she was most ignorant; and her mind, copious for the admission, and intelligent for the arrangement of knowledge, received all new ideas with avidity.

Pleasure given in society, like money lent in usury, returns with interest to those who dispense it: and the discourse of Mr. Monckton conferred not a greater favour upon Cecilia than her attention to it repaid. And thus the speaker and the hearer being mutually gratified, they had always met with complacency, and commonly parted with regret.

This reciprocation of pleasure had, however, produced different effects upon their minds; the ideas of Cecilia were enlarged, while the reflections of Mr. Monckton were embittered. He here saw an object, who to all the advantages of that wealth he had so highly prized, added youth, beauty, and intelligence; though much her senior, he was by no means of an age to render his addressing her an impropriety, and the entertainment she received from his conversation, persuaded him that her good opinion might with ease be improved into a regard the most partial. He regretted the venal rapacity with which he had sacrificed himself to a woman he abhorred, and his wishes for her final decay became daily more fervent. He knew that the acquaintance of Cecilia was confined to a circle of which he was himself the principal ornament, that she had rejected all the proposals of marriage which had hitherto been made to her, and, as he had sedulously

dulously watched her from her earliest years, he had reason to believe that her heart had escaped any dangerous impression. This being her situation, he had long looked upon her as his future property; as such he had indulged his admiration, and as such he had already appropriated her estate, though he had not more vigilantly inspected into her sentiments, than he had guarded his own from a similar scrutiny.

The death of the Dean had, indeed, much alarmed him; he grieved at her leaving Suffolk, where he considered himself the first man, alike in parts and in consequence, and he dreaded her residing in London, where he foresaw that numerous rivals, equal to himself in talents and in riches, would speedily surround her; rivals too, youthful and sanguine, not shackled by present ties, but at liberty to solicit her immediate acceptance. Beauty and independence, rarely found together, would attract a crowd of suitors at once brilliant and assiduous; and the house of Mr. Harrel was eminent for its elegance and gaiety; but yet, undaunted by danger, and confiding in his own powers, he determined to pursue the project he had formed, not fearing by address and perseverance to ensure its success.

CHAPTER II.

AN ARGUMENT.

MR. Monckton had, at this time, a party of company assembled at his house for the purpose of spending the Christmas holidays. He waited with anxiety the arrival of Cecilia, and flew to hand her from the chaise before Mr. Harrel could alight. He observed the melancholy of her countenance, and was much pleased to find that her London journey had so little power to charm her. He conducted her to the breakfast parlour, where Lady Margaret and his friends expected her.

Lady Margaret received her with a coldness that bordered upon incivility; irascible by nature, and jealous by situation, the appearance of beauty alarmed, and of chearfulness disgusted her. She regarded, with watchful suspicion, whoever was addressed by her husband, and having marked his frequent attendance at the Deanery, she had singled out Cecilia for the object of her peculiar antipathy; while Cecilia, perceiving her aversion, though ignorant of its cause, took care to avoid all intercourse with her but

but what ceremony exacted, and pitied in secret the unfortunate lot of her friend.

The company now present consisted of one lady and several gentlemen.

Miss Bennet, the lady, was in every sense of the phrase, the humble companion of Lady Margaret; she was low-born, meanly educated, and narrow-minded; a stranger alike to innate merit or acquired accomplishments, yet skilful in the art of flattery, and an adept in every species of low cunning. With no other view in life than the attainment of affluence without labour, she was not more the slave of the mistress of the house, than the tool of its master; receiving indignity without murmur, and submitting to contempt as a thing of course.

Among the gentlemen, the most conspicuous, by means of his dress, was Mr. Aresby, a captain in the militia; a young man who, having frequently heard the words red-coat and gallantry put together, imagined the conjunction not merely customary, but honourable, and therefore, without even pretending to think of the service of his country, he considered a cockade as a badge of politeness, and wore it but to mark his devotion to the ladies, whom he held himself equipped to conquer, and bound to adore.

The next, who by forwardness the most officious took care to be noticed, was Mr. Morrice, a young lawyer, who, though rising in his

his profession, owed his success neither to distinguished abilities, nor to skill-supplying industry, but to the art of uniting suppleness to others with confidence in himself. To a reverence of rank, talents, and fortune, the most profound, he joined an assurance in his own merit, which no superiority could depress; and with a presumption which encouraged him to aim at all things, he blended a good-humour that no mortification could lessen. And while by the pliability of his disposition he avoided making enemies, by his readiness to oblige, he learned the surest way of making friends, by becoming useful to them.

There were also some neighbouring squires; and there was one old gentleman, who, without seeming to notice any of the company, sat frowning in a corner.

But the principal figure in the circle was Mr. Belfield, a tall, thin young man, whose face was all animation, and whose eyes sparkled with intelligence. He had been intended by his father for trade, but his spirit, soaring above the occupation for which he was designed, from repining led him to resist, and from resisting, to rebel. He eloped from his friends, and contrived to enter the army. But, fond of the polite arts, and eager for the acquirement of knowledge, he found not this way of life much better adapted to his inclination than that

from

from which he had escaped; he soon grew weary of it, was reconciled to his father, and entered at the Temple. But here, too volatile for serious study, and too gay for laborious application, he made little progress: and the same quickness of parts and vigour of imagination which, united with prudence or accompanied by judgment, might have raised him to the head of his profession, being unhappily associated with fickleness and caprice, served only to impede his improvement, and obstruct his preferment. And now, with little business, and that little neglected, a small fortune, and that fortune daily becoming less, the admiration of the world, but that admiration ending simply in civility, he lived an unsettled and unprofitable life, generally caressed, and universally sought, yet careless of his interest, and thoughtless of the future; devoting his time to company, his income to dissipation, and his heart to the Muses.

"I bring you," said Mr. Monckton, as he attended Cecilia into the room, "a subject of sorrow in a young lady, who never gave disturbance to her friends but in quitting them."

"If sorrow," cried Mr. Belfield, darting upon her his piercing eyes, "wears in your part of the world a form such as this, who would wish to change it for a view of joy?"

"She's

"She's divinely handsome, indeed!" cried the Captain, affecting an involuntary exclamation.

Mean time, Cecilia, who was placed next to the lady of the house, quietly began her breakfast; Mr. Morrice, the young lawyer, with the most easy freedom, seating himself at her side, while Mr. Monckton was elsewhere arranging the rest of his guests, in order to secure that place for himself.

Mr. Morrice, without ceremony, attacked his fair neighbour; he talked of her journey, and the prospects of gaiety which it opened to her view; but by these finding her unmoved, he changed his theme, and expatiated upon the delights of the spot she was quitting. Studious to recommend himself to her notice, and indifferent by what means, one moment he flippantly extolled the entertainments of the town; and the next, rapturously described the charms of the country. A word, a look, sufficed to mark her approbation or dissent, which he no sooner discovered, than he slided into her opinion, with as much facility and satisfaction as if it had originally been his own.

Mr. Monckton, suppressing his chagrin, waited some time in expectation that when this young man saw he was standing, he would yield to him his chair: but the remark was not made, and the resignation was not thought of. The Captain, too, regarding

ing the lady as his natural property for the morning, perceived with indignation by whom he was supplanted; while the company in general saw, with much surprize, the place they had severally forborne to occupy, from respect to their host, thus familiarly seized upon by the man who, in the whole room, had the least claim, either from age or rank, to consult nothing but his own inclination.

Mr. Monckton, however, when he found that delicacy and good-manners had no weight with his guest, thought it most expedient to allow them none with himself; and therefore, disguising his displeasure under an appearance of facetiousness, he called out, "Come, Morrice, you that love Christmas sports, what say you to the game of move-all?"

"I like it of all things!" answered Morrice, "and starting from his chair, he skipped to another."

"So should I too," cried Mr. Monckton, instantly taking his place, "were I to remove from any seat but this."

Morrice, though he felt himself outwitted, was the first to laugh, and seemed as happy in the change as Mr. Monckton himself.

Mr. Monckton now, addressing himself to Cecilia, said, "We are going to lose you, and you seem concerned at leaving us; yet, in a very few months, you will forget

Bury,

Bury, forget its inhabitants, and forget its environs."

"If you think so," answered Cecilia, "must I not thence infer that Bury, its inhabitants, and its environs, will in a very few months forget me?"

"Ay, ay, and so much the better!" said Lady Margaret, muttering between her teeth, "so much the better!"

"I am sorry you think so, madam," cried Cecilia, colouring at her ill-breeding.

"You will find," said Mr. Monckton, affecting the same ignorance of her meaning that Cecilia really felt, "as you mix with the world, you will find that Lady Margaret has but expressed what by almost every body is thought: to neglect old friends, and to court new acquaintance, though perhaps not yet avowedly delivered as a precept from parents to children, is nevertheless so universally recommended by example, that those who act differently incur general censure for affecting singularity."

"It is happy then, for me," answered Cecilia, "that neither my actions nor myself, will be sufficiently known to attract public observation."

"You intend, then, madam," said Mr. Belfield, "in defiance of these maxims of the world, to be guided by the light of your own understanding."

"And

"And such," returned Mr. Monckton, "at first setting out in life, is the intention of every one. The closet reasoner is always refined in his sentiments, and always confident in his virtue; but when he mixes with the world, when he thinks less and acts more, he soon finds the necessity of accommodating himself to such customs as are already received, and of pursuing quietly the track that is already marked out."

"But not," exclaimed Mr. Belfield, "if he has the least grain of spirit! the beaten track will be the last that a man of parts will deign to tread,

> For common rules were ne'er design'd
> Directors of a noble mind."

"A pernicious maxim! a most pernicious maxim!" cried the old gentleman, who sat frowning in a corner of the room.

"Deviations from common rules," said Mr. Monckton, without taking any notice of this interruption, "when they proceed from genius, are not merely pardonable, but admirable; and you, Belfield, have a peculiar right to plead their merits; but so little genius as there is in the world, you must surely grant that pleas of this sort are very rarely to be urged."

"And why rarely," cried Belfield, "but because your general rules, your appropriated

ated customs, your settled forms, are but so many absurd arrangements to impede not merely the progress of genius, but the use of understanding? If man dared act for himself, if neither worldly views, contracted prejudices, eternal precepts, nor compulsive examples, swayed his better reason and impelled his conduct, how noble indeed would he be! *how infinite in faculties! in apprehension how like a God!*" (*a*)

"All this," answered Mr. Monckton, "is but the doctrine of a lively imagination, that looks upon impossibilities simply as difficulties, and upon difficulties as mere invitations to victory. But experience teaches another lesson; experience shews that the opposition of an individual to a community is always dangerous in the operation, and seldom successful in the event;—never, indeed, without a concurrence, strange as desirable, of fortunate circumstances with great abilities."

"And why is this," returned Belfield, "but because the attempt is so seldom made? The pitiful prevalence of general conformity extirpates genius, and murders originality; man is brought up, not as if he were "the noblest work of God," but as a mere ductile machine of human formation; he is early taught that he must neither consult his understanding, nor pursue his inclinations, lest,

(*a*) Hamlet.

unhappily

unhappily for his commerce with the world, his understanding should be averse to fools, and provoke him to despise them; and his inclinations to the tyranny of perpetual restraint, and give him courage to abjure it."

"I am ready enough to allow," answered Mr. Monckton "that an eccentric genius, such, for example, as yours, may murmur at the tediousness of complying with the customs of the world, and wish, unconfined and at large, to range through life, without any settled plan or prudential restriction; but would you, therefore, grant the same licence to every one? would you wish to see the world peopled with defiers of order, and contemners of established forms? and not merely excuse the irregularities resulting from uncommon parts, but encourage those, also, to lead, who without blundering cannot even follow?"

"I would have *all* men," replied Belfield, "whether philosophers or idiots, act for themselves. Every one would then appear what he is; enterprize would be encouraged, and imitation abolished; genius would feel its superiority, and folly its insignificance; and then, and then only, should we cease to be surfeited with that eternal sameness of manner and appearance which at present runs through all ranks of men."

"Petrifying dull work this, *mon ami!*" said the Captain, in a whisper to Morrice: "*de grace*, start some new game."

"With

"With all my heart," answered he; and then, suddenly jumping up, exclaimed, "A hare! a hare!"

"Where?—where?—which way?" and all the gentlemen arose, and ran to different windows, except the master of the house, the object of whose pursuit was already near him.

Morrice, with much pretended earnestness, flew from window to window, to trace footsteps upon the turf which he knew had not printed it: yet, never inattentive to his own interest, when he perceived, in the midst of the combustion he had raised, that Lady Margaret was incensed at the noise it produced, he artfully gave over his search, and seating himself in a chair next to her, eagerly offered to assist her with cakes, chocolate, or whatever the table afforded.

He had, however, effectually broken up the conversation; and breakfast being over, Mr. Harrel ordered his chaise, and Cecilia arose to take leave.

And now, not without some difficulty, could Mr. Monckton disguise the uneasy fears which her departure occasioned him. Taking her hand, "I suppose," he said, "you will not permit an old friend to visit you in town, lest the sight of him should prove a disagreeable memorial of the time you will soon regret having wasted in the country?"

"Why will you say this, Mr. Monckton?" cried Cecilia; "I am sure you cannot think it."

"These

"These profound studiers of mankind, madam," ſaid Belfield, "are mighty ſorry champions for conſtancy or friendſhip. They wage war with all expectations but of depravity, and grant no quarter even to the pureſt deſigns, where they think there will be any temptation to deviate from them."

"Temptation," ſaid Mr. Monckton, "is very eaſy of reſiſtance in theory; but if you reflect upon the great change of ſituation Miſs Beverley will experience, upon the new ſcenes ſhe will ſee, the new acquaintance ſhe muſt make, and the new connections ſhe may form, you will not wonder at the anxiety of a friend for her welfare."

"But I preſume," cried Belfield, with a laugh, "Miſs Beverley does not mean to convey her perſon to town, and leave her underſtanding locked up, with other natural curioſities, in the country? Why, therefore, may not the ſame diſcernment regulate her adoption of new acquaintance, and choice of new connections, that guided her ſelection of old ones? Do you ſuppoſe that becauſe ſhe is to take leave of you, ſhe is to take leave of herſelf?"

"Where fortune ſmiles upon youth and beauty," anſwered Mr. Monckton, "do you think it nothing that their fair poſſeſſor ſhould make a ſudden tranſition of ſituation from the quietneſs of a retired life in the

country, to the gaiety of a splendid town residence?"

"Where fortune *frowns* upon youth and beauty," returned Belfield, "they may not irrationally excite commiseration; but where nature and chance unite their forces to bless the same object, what room there may be for alarm or lamentation I confess I cannot divine."

"What!" cried Mr. Monckton, with some emotion, "are there not sharpers, fortune-hunters, sycophants, wretches of all sorts and denominations, who watch the approach of the rich and unwary, feed upon their inexperience, and prey upon their property?"

"Come, come," cried Mr. Harrel, "it is time I should hasten my fair ward away, if this is your method of describing the place she is going to live in."

"Is it possible," cried the Captain, advancing to Cecilia, "that this lady has never yet tried the town?" and then, lowering his voice, and smiling languishingly in her face, he added, "Can any thing so divinely handsome have been immured in the country? Ah! *quelle honte!* do you make it a principle to be so cruel?"

Cecilia, thinking such a compliment merited not any other notice than a slight bow, turned to Lady Margaret, and said, "Should your

your ladyship be in town this winter, may I expect the honour of hearing where I may wait upon you?"

"I don't know whether I ſhall go or not," answered the old lady, with her usual ungraciousness.

Cecilia would now have haſtened away, but Mr. Monckton, ſtopping her again, expreſſed his fears of the conſequences of her journey; "Be upon your guard," he cried, "with all new acquaintance; judge nobody from appearances; form no friendſhip raſhly; take time to look about you, and remember you can make no alteration in your way of life, without greater probability of faring worſe, than chance of faring better. Keep therefore as you are, and the more you ſee of others, the more you will rejoice that you neither reſemble nor are connected with them."

"This from you, Mr. Monckton!" cried Belfield, "what is become of your conformity ſyſtem? I thought all the world was to be alike, or only ſo much the worſe for any variation?"

"I ſpoke," ſaid Mr. Monckton, "of the world in general, not of this lady in particular; and who that knows, who that ſees her, would not wiſh it were poſſible ſhe might continue in every reſpect exactly and unalterably what ſhe is at preſent?"

"I find," said Cecilia, "you are determined that flattery, at least, should I meet with it, shall owe no pernicious effects to its novelty."

"Well, Miss Beverley," cried Mr. Harrel, "will you now venture to accompany me to town? Or has Mr. Monckton frightened you from proceeding any further?"

"If," replied Cecilia, "I felt no more sorrow in quitting my friends, than I feel terror in venturing to London, with how light a heart should I make the journey!"

"Brava!" cried Belfield, "I am happy to find the discourse of Mr. Monckton has not intimidated you, nor prevailed upon you to deplore your condition, in having the accumulated misery of being young, fair, and affluent."

"Alas! poor thing!" exclaimed the old gentleman who sat in the corner, fixing his eyes upon Cecilia, with an expression of mingled grief and pity.

Cecilia started, but no one else paid him any attention.

The usual ceremonies of leave-taking now followed, and the Captain, with moſt obsequious reverence, advanced to conduct Cecilia to the carriage; but in the midst of the dumb eloquence of his vows and smiles, Mr. Morrice, affecting not to perceive his design, skipped gaily between them, and without any

any previous formality, seized the hand of Cecilia himself; failing not, however, to temper the freedom of his action by a look of respect the most profound.

The Captain shrugged and retired. But Mr. Monckton, enraged at his assurance, and determined it should nothing avail him, exclaimed, "Why how now, Morrice, do you take away the privilege of my house?"

"True, true;" answered Morrice, "you members of parliament have an undoubted right to be tenacious of your privileges." Then, bowing with a look of veneration to Cecilia, he resigned her hand with an air of as much happiness as he had taken it.

Mr. Monckton, in leading her to the chaise, again begged permission to wait upon her in town: Mr. Harrel took the hint, and entreated him to consider his house as his own; and Cecilia, gratefully thanking him for his solicitude in her welfare, added, "And I hope, sir, you will honour me with your counsel and admonitions with respect to my future conduct, whenever you have the goodness to let me see you."

This was precisely his wish. He begged, in return, that she would treat him with confidence, and then suffered the chaise to drive off.

CHAPTER III.

AN ARRIVAL.

AS soon as they lost sight of the house, Cecilia expressed her surprise at the behaviour of the old gentleman who sat in the corner, whose general silence, seclusion from the company, and absence of mind, had strongly excited her curiosity.

Mr. Harrel could give her very little satisfaction: he told her that he had twice or thrice met him public places, where every body remarked the singularity of his manners and appearance, but that he had never discoursed with any one to whom he seemed known; and that he was as much surprised as herself in seeing so strange a character at the house of Mr. Monckton.

The conversation then turned upon the family they had just quitted, and Cecilia warmly declared the good opinion she had of Mr. Monckton, the obligations she owed to him for the interest which, from her childhood, he had always taken in her affairs: and her hopes of reaping much instruction from the friendship of a man who had so extensive a knowledge of the world.

Mr.

Mr. Harrel professed himself well satisfied that she should have such a counsellor; for though but little acquainted with him, he knew he was a man of fortune and fashion, and well esteemed in the world. They mutually compassionated his unhappy situation in domestic life, and Cecilia innocently expressed her concern at the dislike Lady Margaret seemed to have taken to her; a dislike which Mr. Harrel naturally imputed to her youth and beauty, yet without suspecting any cauſe more cogent than a general jealousy of attractions of which she had herself so long outlived the possession.

As their journey drew near to its conclusion, all the uneasy and disagreeable sensations which in the bosom of Cecilia had accompanied its commencement, gave way to the expectation of quick approaching happiness in again meeting her favourite young friend.

Mrs. Harrel had in childhood been her playmate, and in youth her school-fellow; a similarity of disposition with respect to sweetness of temper, had early rendered them dear to each other, though the resemblance extended no further, Mrs. Harrel having no pretensions to the wit or understanding of her friend; but she was amiable and obliging, and therefore sufficiently deserving affection, though neither blazing with attractions which laid claim to admiration, nor endowed with

those superior qualities which mingle respect in the love they inspire.

From the time of her marriage, which was near three years, she had entirely quitted Suffolk, and had had no intercourse with Cecilia but by letter. She was now just returned from Violet Bank, the name given by Mr. Harrel to a villa about twelve miles from London, where with a large party of company she had spent the Christmas holidays.

Their meeting was tender and affectionate; the sensibility of Cecilia's heart flowed from her eyes, and the gladness of Mrs. Harrel's dimpled her cheeks.

As soon as their mutual salutations, expressions of kindness, and general enquiries had been made, Mrs. Harrel begged to lead her to the drawing-room, "where," she added, "you will see some of my friends, who are impatient to be presented to you."

"I could have wished," said Cecilia, "after so long an absence, to have passed this first evening alone with you."

"They are all people who particularly desired to see you," she answered, "and I had them by way of entertaining you, as I was afraid you would be out of spirits at leaving Bury."

Cecilia, finding the kindness of her intentions, forbore any further expostulation, and quietly followed her to the drawing-room.

But

But as the door was opened, she was struck with amazement upon finding that the apartment, which was spacious, lighted with brilliancy, and decorated with magnificence, was more than half filled with company, every one of which was dressed with gaiety and profusion.

Cecilia, who from the word friends, expected to have seen a small and private party, selected for the purpose of social converse, started involuntarily at the sight before her, and had hardly courage to proceed.

Mrs. Harrel, however, took her hand, and introduced her to the whole company, who were all severally named to her; a ceremonial which, though not merely agreeable but even necessary to those who live in the gay world, in order to obviate distressing mistakes, or unfortunate implications in discourse, would by Cecilia have been willingly dispensed with, since to her their names were as new as their persons, and since, knowing nothing of their histories, parties, or connections, she could to nothing allude: it therefore served but to heighten her colour and increase her embarrassment.

A native dignity of mind, however, which had early taught her to distinguish modesty from bashfulness, enabled her in a short time to conquer her surprise, and recover her composure. She entreated Mrs. Harrel to apologise for her appearance, and being seated

between two young ladies, endeavoured to seem reconciled to it herself.

Nor was this very difficult; for while her dress, which she had not changed since her journey, joined to the novelty of her face, attracted general observation, the report of her fortune, which had preceded her entrance, secured to her general respect. She soon found, too, that a company was not necessarily formidable because full dressed, that familiarity could be united with magnificence, and that though, to her, every one seemed attired to walk in a procession, or to grace a drawing-room, no formality was assumed, and no solemnity was affected: every one was without restraint, even rank obtained but little distinction; ease was the general plan, and entertainment the general pursuit.

Celicia, though new to London, which city the ill health of her uncle had hitherto prevented her seeing, was yet no stranger to company; she had passed her time in retirement, but not in obscurity, since for some years past she had presided at the table of the Dean, who was visited by the first people of the county in which he lived: and notwithstanding his parties, which were frequent, though small, and elegant, though private, had not prepared her for the splendour or the diversity of a London assembly, they yet, by initiating her in the practical rules of good-

breeding,

breeding, had taught her to subdue the timid fears of total inexperience, and to repress the bashful feelings of shamefaced awkwardness; fears and feelings which rather call for compassion than admiration, and which, except in extreme youth, serve but to degrade the modesty they indicate.

She regarded, therefore, the two young ladies between whom she was seated, rather with a wish of addressing, than a shyness of being attacked by them; but the elder, Miss Larolles, was earnestly engaged in a discourse with a gentleman, and the younger, Miss Leeson, totally discouraged her, by the invariable silence and gravity with which from time to time she met her eyes.

Uninterrupted, therefore, except by occasional speeches from Mr. and Mrs. Harrel, she spent the first part of the evening merely in surveying the company.

Nor was the company dilatory in returning her notice, since from the time of her entrance into the room, she had been the object of general regard.

The ladies took an exact inventory of her dress, and internally settled how differently they would have been attired if blest with equal affluence.

The men disputed amongst themselves whether or not she was painted; and one of them asserting boldly that she *rouged well*, a debate ensued, which ended in a bet, and the de-

cision was mutually agreed to depend upon the colour of her cheeks by the beginning of April, when, if unfaded by bad hours and continual dissipation, they wore the same bright bloom with which they were now glowing, her champion acknowledged that his wager would be lost.

In about half an hour the gentleman with whom Miss Larolles had been talking, left the room, and then that young Lady, turning suddenly to Cecilia, exclaimed, "How odd Mr. Meadows is! Do you know he says he shan't be well enough to go to Lady Nyland's assembly! How ridiculous! as if that could hurt him."

Cecilia, surprised at an attack so little ceremonious, lent her a civil, but silent attention.

"You shall be there, sha'n't you?" she added.

"No, ma'am, I have not the honour of being at all known to her ladyship."

"O there's nothing in that," returned she, "for Mrs. Harrel can acquaint her you are here, and then, you know, she'll send you a ticket, and then you can go."

"A ticket?" repeated Cecilia, "does Lady Nyland only admit her company with tickets?"

"O lord," cried Miss Larolles, laughing immoderately, "don't you know what I mean? Why a ticket is only a visiting card, with

with a name upon it; but we all call them tickets now."

Cecilia thanked her for the information, and then Miss Larolles enquired how many miles she had travelled since morning?

"Seventy-three;" answered Cecilia "which I hope will plead my apology for being so little dressed."

"O, you're vastly well," returned the other, "and for my part, I never think about dress. But only conceive what happened to me last year! Do you know I came to town the twentieth of March! Was not that horrid provoking?"

"Perhaps so," said Cecilia, "but I am sure I cannot tell why."

"Not tell why?" repeated Miss Larolles, "why don't you know it was the very night of the grand private masquerade at Lord Darien's? I would not have missed it for the whole universe. I never travelled in such an agony in my life: we did not get to town till monstrous late, and then do you know I had neither a ticket nor a habit! Only conceive what a distress! Well, I sent to every creature I knew for a ticket, but they all said there was not one to be had; so I was just like a mad creature——but about ten or eleven o'clock, a young lady of my particular acquaintance, by the greatest good luck in the world, happened to be taken suddenly ill;

so she sent me her ticket—was not that delightful?"

"For *her*, extremely!" said Cecilia, laughing.

"Well," she continued, "then I was almost out of my wits with joy; and I went about, and got one of the sweetest dresses you ever saw. If you'll call upon me some morning, I'll shew it you."

Cecilia, not prepared for an invitation so abrupt, bowed without speaking, and Miss Larolles, too happy in talking herself to be offended at the silence of another, continued her narration.

"Well, but now comes the vilest part of the business; do you know when every thing else was ready, I could not get my hair-dresser? I sent all over the town—he was no where to be found; I thought I should have died with vexation; I assure you I cried so, that if I had not gone in a mask, I should have been ashamed to be seen. And so, after all this monstrous fatigue, I was forced to have my hair dressed by my own maid, quite in a common way; was it not cruelly mortifying?"

"Why yes," answered Cecilia, "I should think it was almost sufficient to make you regret the illness of the young lady who sent you her ticket."

They were now interrupted by Mrs. Harrel, who advanced to them, followed by a young

young man of a serious aspect and modest demeanour, and said, "I am happy to see you both so well engaged; but my brother has been reproaching me with presenting every body to Miss Beverley but himself."

"I cannot hope," said Mr. Arnott, "that I have any place in the recollection of Miss Beverley; but long as I have been absent from Suffolk, and unfortunate as I was in not seeing her during my last visit there, I am yet sure, even at this distance of time, grown and formed as she is, I should instantly have known her."

"Amazing!" cried an elderly gentleman, in a tone of irony, who was standing near them, "for the face is a very common one!"

"I remember well," said Cecilia, "that when you left Suffolk, I thought I had lost my best friend."

"Is that possible?" cried Mr. Arnott, with a look of much delight.

"Yes, indeed, and not without reason, for in all disputes you were my advocate, in all plays, my companion, and in all difficulties, my assistant."

"Madam," cried the same gentleman, "if you liked him because he was your advocate, companion, and assistant, pray like me too, for I am ready to become all three at once."

"You are very good," said Cecilia laughing,

ing, " but at present I find no want of any defender."

" That's pity," he returned, " for Mr. Arnott seems to me very willing to act the same parts over again with you."

" But for that purpose he must return to the days of his childhood."

" Ah, would to Heaven it were possible!" cried Mr. Arnott, " for they were the happiest of my life."

" After such a confession," said his companion, " surely you will let him attempt to renew them? 'tis but taking a walk backwards; and though it is very early in life for Mr. Arnott to covet that retrograde motion, which, in the regular course of things, we shall all in our turns sigh for, yet with such a motive as recovering Miss Beverley for a playfellow, who can wonder that he anticipates in youth the hopeless wishes of age?"

Here Miss Larolles, who was one of that numerous tribe of young ladies to whom all conversation is irksome in which they are not themselves engaged, quitted her place, of which Mr. Gosport, Cecilia's new acquaintance, immediately took possession.

" Is it utterly impossible," continued this gentleman, " that I should assist in procuring Mr. Arnott such a renovation? Is there no subaltern part I can perform to facilitate the project? for I will either *hide* or *seek* with any

any boy in the parish; and for a *2 in the corner*, there is none more celebrated."

"I have no doubt, Sir," answered Cecilia, "of your accomplishments, and I should be not a little entertained with the surprise of the company, if you could persuade yourself to display them."

"And what," cried he, "could the company do half so well as to arise also, and join in the sport? it would but interrupt some tale of scandal, or some description of a *toûpée*. Active wit, however despicable when compared with intellectual, is yet surely better than the insignificant click clack of modish conversation," casting his eyes towards Miss Larolles, "or even the pensive dullness of affected silence," changing their direction towards Miss Leeson.

Cecilia, though surprised at an attack upon the society her friend had selected, by one who was admitted to make a part of it, felt its justice too strongly to be offended at its severity.

"I have often wished," he continued, "that when large parties are collected, as here, without any possible reason why they might not as well be separated, something could be proposed in which each person might innocently take a share: for surely, after the first half hour, they can find little new to observe in the dress of their neighbours, or to display in their own; and with whatever

whatever seeming gaiety they may contrive to fill up the middle and end of the evening, by wire-drawing the comments afforded by the beginning, they are yet so miserably fatigued, that if they have not four or five places to run to every night, they suffer nearly as much from weariness of their friends in company, as they would do from weariness of themselves in solitude."

Here, by the general breaking up of the party, the conversation was interrupted, and Mr. Gosport was obliged to make his exit; not much to the regret of Cecilia, who was impatient to be alone with Mrs. Harrel.

The rest of the evening, therefore, was spent much more to her satisfaction; it was devoted to friendship, to mutual enquiries, to kind congratulations, and endearing recollections; and though it was late when she retired, she retired with reluctance.

CHAPTER IV.

A SKETCH OF HIGH LIFE.

EAGER to renew a conversation which had afforded her so much pleasure, Cecilia, neither sensible of fatigue from her change of

of hours nor her journey, arose with the light, and as soon as she was dressed, hastened to the breakfast apartment.

She had not, however, been more impatient to enter than she soon became to quit it; for though not much surprised to find herself there before her friend, her ardour for waiting her arrival was somewhat chilled, upon finding the fire but just lighted, the room cold, and the servants still employed in putting it in order.

At ten o'clock she made another attempt: the room was then better prepared for her reception, but still it was empty. Again she was retiring, when the appearance of Mr. Arnott stopt her.

He expressed his surprise at her early rising, in a manner that marked the pleasure it gave to him; and then, returning to the conversation of the preceding evening, he expatiated with warmth and feeling upon the happiness of his boyish days, remembered every circumstance belonging to the plays in which they had formerly been companions, and dwelt upon every incident with a minuteness of delight that shewed his unwillingness ever to have done with the subject.

This discourse detained her till they were joined by Mrs. Harrell, and then another more gay and more general succeeded to it.

During their breakfast, Miss Larolles was announced

announced as a visitor to Cecilia, to whom she immediately advanced with the intimacy of an old acquaintance, taking her hand, and assuring her she could no longer defer the honour of waiting upon her.

Cecilia, much amazed at this warmth of civility from one to whom she was almost a stranger, received her compliment rather coldly; but Miss Larolles, without consulting her looks, or attending to her manner, proceeded to express the earnest desire she had long had to be known to her; to hope they should meet very often; to declare nothing could make her so happy; and to beg leave to recommend to her notice her own milliner.

"I assure you," she continued, "she has all Paris in her disposal; the sweetest caps! the most beautiful trimmings! and her ribbons are quite divine! It is the most dangerous thing you can conceive to go near her; I never trust myself in her room but I am sure to be ruined. If you please, I will take you to her this morning."

"If her acquaintance is so ruinous," said Cecilia, "I think I had better avoid it."

"O impossible! there's no such thing as living without her. To be sure she's shockingly dear, that I must own; but then who can wonder? She makes such sweet things, 'tis impossible to pay her too much for them."

Mrs.

Mrs. Harrel now joining in the recommendation, the party was agreed upon, and, accompanied by Mr. Arnott, the ladies proceeded to the house of the milliner.

Here the raptures of Miss Larolles were again excited: she viewed the finery displayed with delight inexpressible, enquired who were the intended possessors, heard their names with envy, and sighed with all the bitterness of mortification that she was unable to order home almost every thing she looked at.

Having finished their business here, they proceeded to various other dress manufacturers, in whose praises Miss Larolles was almost equally eloquent, and to appropriate whose goods she was almost equally earnest; and then, after attending this loquacious young lady to her father's house, Mrs. Harrel and Cecilia returned to their own.

Cecilia rejoiced at the separation, and congratulated herself that the rest of the day might be spent alone with her friend.

"Why no," said Mrs. Harrel, "not absolutely alone, for I expect some company at night."

"Company again to night?"

"Nay, don't be frightened, for it will be a very small party; not more than fifteen or twenty in all."

"Is that so small a party?" said Cecilia, smiling; "and how short a time since would you,

you, as well as I, have reckoned it a large one!"

"O, you mean when I lived in the country," returned Mrs. Harrel; "but what in the world could I know of parties or company then?"

"Not much, indeed," said Cecilia, "as my present ignorance shews."

They then parted to dress for dinner.

The company of this evening were again all strangers to Cecilia, except Miss Leeson, who was seated next to her, and whose frigid looks again compelled her to observe the same silence she so resolutely practised herself. Yet not the less was her internal surprise, that a lady who seemed determined neither to give nor receive any entertainment, should repeatedly chuse to show herself in a company, with no part of which she associated.

Mr. Arnott, who contrived to occupy the seat on her other side, suffered not the silence with which her fair neighbour had infected her to spread any further: he talked, indeed, upon no new subject; and upon the old one, of their former sports and amusements, he had already exhausted all that was worth being mentioned; but not yet had he exhausted the pleasure he received from the theme; it seemed always fresh, and always enchanting to him; it employed his thoughts, regaled his imagination, and enlivened his discourse.

discourse. Cecilia in vain tried to change it for another; he quitted it only by compulsion, and returned to it with redoubled eagerness.

When the company was retired, and Mr. Arnott only remained with the ladies, Cecilia, with no little surprise, enquired for Mr. Harrel, observing that she had not seen him the whole day.

"O," cried his lady, "don't think of wondering at that, for it happens continually. He dines at home, indeed, in general, but otherwise I should see nothing of him at all."

"Indeed! why how does he fill up his time?"

"That I am sure I cannot tell, for he never consults me about it; but I suppose much in the same way that other people do."

"Ah Priscilla!" cried Cecilia, with some earnestness, "how little did I ever expect to see you so much a fine lady!"

"A fine lady?" repeated Mrs. Harrel: "why what is it I do? don't I live exactly like every body else that mixes at all with the world?"

"You, Miss Beverley," said Mr. Arnott in a low voice, "will I hope give to the world an example, not take one from it."

Soon after, they separated for the night.

The next morning, Cecilia took care to fill up her time more advantageously, than

in wandering about the house in search of a companion she now expected not to find: she got together her books, arranged them to her fancy, and secured to herself, for the future occupation of her leisure hours, the exhaustless fund of entertainment which reading, that richest, highest, and noblest source of intellectual enjoyment, perpetually affords.

While they were yet at breakfast, they were again visited by Miss Larolles. "I am come," cried she eagerly, "to run away with you both to my Lord Belgrade's sale. All the world will be there; and we shall go in with tickets, and you have no notion how it will be crowded."

"What is to be sold there?" said Cecilia.

"O every thing you can conceive; house, stables, china, laces, horses, caps, every thing in the world."

"And do you intend to buy any thing?"

"Lord, no; but one likes to see the people's things."

Cecilia then begged they would excuse her attendance.

"O by no means," cried Miss Larolles, "you must go, I assure you; there'll be such a monstrous crowd as you never saw in your life. I dare say we shall be half squeezed to death."

"That," said Cecilia, "is an inducement which you must not expect will have

much weight with a poor rustic just out of the country: it must require all the polish of a long residence in the metropolis to make it attractive."

"O but do go, for I assure you it will be the best sale we shall have this season. I can't imagine, Mrs. Harrel, what poor Lady Belgrade will do with herself; I hear the creditors have seized every thing; I really believe creditors are the cruellest set of people in the world! They have taken those beautiful buckles out of her shoes! Poor soul! I declare it will make my heart ache to see them put up. It's quite shocking, upon my word. I wonder who'll buy them. I assure you they were the prettiest fancied I ever saw. But come, if you don't go directly, there will be no getting in."

Cecilia again desired to be excused accompanying them, adding, that she wished to spend the day at home.

"At home, my dear?" cried Mrs. Harrel; "why we have been engaged to Mrs. Mears this month, and she begged me to prevail with you to be of the party. I expect she'll call, or send you a ticket, every moment."

"How unlucky for me," said Cecilia, "that you should happen to have so many engagements just at this time! I hope, at least, there will not be any for to-morrow."

"O yes; to morrow we go to Mrs. Elton's."

"Again to-morrow? and how long is this to last?"

"O Heaven knows; I'll shew you my catalogue."

She then produced a book which contained a list of engagements for more than three weeks. "And as these," she said, "are struck off, new ones are made; and so it is we go on till after the birth-day."

When this list had been examined and commented upon by Miss Larolles, and viewed and wondered at by Cecilia, it was restored to its place, and the two ladies went together to the auction, permitting Cecilia, at her repeated request, to return to her own apartment.

She returned, however, neither satisfied with the behaviour of her friend, nor pleased with her own situation: the sobriety of her education, as it had early instilled into her mind the pure dictates of religion, and strict principles of honour, had also taught her to regard continual dissipation as an introduction to vice, and unbounded extravagance as the harbinger of injustice. Long accustomed to see Mrs. Harrel in the same retirement in which she had hitherto lived herself, when books were their first amusement, and the society of each other was their chief happiness, the change she now perceived in her

mind and manners equally concerned and surprised her. She found her insensible to friendship, indifferent to her husband, and negligent of all social felicity. Dress, company, parties of pleasure, and public places, seemed not merely to occupy all her time, but to gratify all her wishes. Cecilia, in whose heart glowed the warmest affections and most generous virtue, was cruelly depressed and mortified by this disappointment; yet she had the good sense to determine against upbraiding her, well aware that if reproach has any power over indifference, it is only that of changing it into aversion.

Mrs. Harrel, in truth, was innocent of heart, though dissipated in life; married very young, she had made an immediate transition from living in a private family and a country town, to becoming mistress of one of the most elegant houses in Portman-square, being at the head of a splendid fortune, and wife to a man whose own pursuits soon shewed her the little value he himself set upon domestic happiness. Immersed in the fashionable round of company and diversions, her understanding, naturally weak, was easily dazzled by the brilliancy of her situation; greedily, therefore, sucking in air impregnated with luxury and extravagance, she had soon no pleasure but to vie with some rival in elegance, and no ambition but to exceed some superior in expence.

The Dean of —— in naming Mr. Harrel for one of the guardians of his niece, had no other view than that of indulging her wishes by allowing her to reside in the house of her friend: he had little personal knowledge of him, but was satisfied with the nomination, because acquainted with his family, fortune, and connections, all which persuaded him to believe, without further enquiry, that it was more peculiarly proper for his niece than any other he could make.

In his choice of the other two trustees he had been more prudent; the firſt of these, the honourable Mr. Delvile, was a man of high birth and character; the second, Mr. Briggs, had spent his whole life in business, in which he had already amassed an immense fortune, and had still no greater pleasure than that of increasing it. From the honour, therefore, of Mr. Delvile, he expected the most scrupulous watchfulness that his niece should in nothing be injured, and from the experience of Mr. Briggs in money matters, and his diligence in transacting business, he hoped for the most vigilant observance that her fortune, while under his care, should be turned to the best account. And thus, as far as he was able, he had equally consulted her pleasure, her security, and her pecuniary advantage.

Mrs. Harrel returned home only in time to dress for the rest of the day.

When

When Cecilia was summoned to dinner, she found, besides her host and hostess and Mr. Arnott, a gentleman she had not before seen, but who, as soon as she entered the parlour, Mr. Harrel presented to her, saying at the same time he was one of the most intimate of his friends.

This gentleman, Sir Robert Floyer, was about thirty years of age; his face was neither remarkable for its beauty nor its ugliness, but sufficiently distinguished by its expression of invincible assurance; his person, too, though neither striking for its grace nor its deformity, attracted notice from the insolence of his deportment. His manners, haughty and supercilious, marked the high opinion he cherished of his own importance; and his air and address, at once bold and negligent, announced his happy perfection in the character at which he aimed, that of an accomplished man of the town.

The moment Cecilia appeared, she became the object of his attention, though neither with the look of admiration due to her beauty, nor yet with that of curiosity excited by her novelty, but with the scrutinizing observation of a man on the point of making a bargain, who views with fault-seeking eyes the property he means to cheapen.

Cecilia, wholly unused to an examination so little ceremonious, shrunk abashed from his regards: but his conversation was not

less displeasing to her than his looks; his principal subjects, which were horse-racing, losses at play, and disputes at gaming tables, could afford her but little amusement, because she could not understand them; and the episodes with which they were occasionally interspersed, consisting chiefly of comparative strictures upon celebrated beauties, hints of impending bankruptcies, and witticisms upon recent divorces, were yet more disagreeable to her, because more intelligible. Wearied, therefore, with uninteresting anecdotes, and offended with injudicious subjects of pleasantry, she waited with impatience for the moment of retiring; but Mrs. Harrel, less eager, because better entertained, was in no haste to remove, and therefore she was compelled to remain quiet, till they were both obliged to arise, in order to fulfil their engagement with Mrs. Mears.

As they went together to the house of that lady, in Mrs. Harrel's vis-à-vis, Cecilia, not doubting but their opinions concerning the Baronet would accord, instantly and openly declared her disapprobation of every thing he had uttered; but Mrs. Harrel, far from confirming her expectations, only said, "I am sorry you don't like him, for he is almost always with us."

"Do you like him, then, yourself?"

"Extremely; he is very entertaining and clever, and knows the world."

"How

"How judiciously do you praise him!" cried Cecilia; "and how long might you deliberate before you could add another word to his panegyric!"

Mrs. Harrel, satisfied to commend, without even attempting to vindicate him, was soon content to change the subject; and Cecilia, though much concerned that the husband of her friend had made so disgraceful an election of a favourite, yet hoped that the lenity of Mrs. Harrel resulted from her desire to excuse his choice, not from her own approbation.

CHAPTER V.

AN ASSEMBLY.

MRS. Mears, whose character was of that common sort which renders delineation superfluous, received them with the customary forms of good breeding.

Mrs. Harrel soon engaged herself at a card-table: and Cecilia, who declined playing, was seated next to Miss Leeson, who arose to return the courtesy she made in advancing

vancing to her, but that past, did not even look at her.

Cecilia, though fond of conversation and formed for society, was too diffident to attempt speaking where so little encouraged; they both, therefore, continued silent, till Sir Robert Floyer, Mr. Harrel, and Mr. Arnott, entered the room together, and all at the same time advanced to Cecilia.

"What," cried Mr. Harrel, "don't you chuse to play, Miss Beverley?"

"I flatter myself," cried Mr. Arnott, "that Miss Beverley never plays at all, for then, in one thing, I shall have the honour to resemble her."

"Very seldom, indeed," answered Cecilia, "and consequently very ill."

"O, you must take a few lessons," said Mr. Harrel; "Sir Robert Floyer, I am sure, will be proud to instruct you."

Sir Robert, who had placed himself opposite to her, and was staring full in her face, made a slight inclination of his head, and said, "certainly."

"I should be a very unpromising pupil," returned Cecilia, "for I fear I should not only want diligence to improve, but desire."

"O, you will learn better things," said Mr. Harrel; "we have had you yet but three days amongst us—in three months we shall see the difference."

"I hope

"I hope not," cried Mr. Arnott. "I earnestly hope there will be none!"

Mr. Harrel now joined another party; and Mr. Arnott seeing no seat vacant near that of Cecilia, moved round to the back of her chair, where he patiently stood for the rest of the evening. But Sir Robert still kept his post, and still, without troubling himself to speak, kept his eyes fixed upon the same object.

Cecilia, offended by his boldness, looked a thousand ways to avoid him; but her embarrassment, by giving greater play to her features, served only to keep awake an attention which might otherwise have wearied. She was almost tempted to move her chair round and face Mr. Arnott, but though she wished to shew her disapprobation of the Baronet, she had not yet been reconciled by fashion to turning her back upon the company at large, for the indulgence of conversing with some particular person: a fashion which to unaccustomed observers seems rude and repulsive, but which, when once adopted, carries with it imperceptibly its own recommendation, in the ease, convenience, and freedom which it promotes.

Thus disagreeably stationed, she found but little assistance from the neighbourhood of Mr. Arnott, since even his own desire of conversing with her was swallowed up by an

anxious and involuntary impulse to watch the looks and motions of Sir Robert.

At length, quite tired of sitting as if merely an object to be gazed at, she determined to attempt entering into conversation with Miss Leeson.

The difficulty, however, was not inconsiderable how to make the attack; she was unacquainted with her friends and connections, uninformed of her way of thinking, or her way of life, ignorant even of the sound of her voice, and chilled by the coldness of her aspect: yet, having no other alternative, she was more willing to encounter the forbidding looks of this lady, than to continue silently abashed under the scrutinizing eyes of Sir Robert.

After much deliberation with what subject to begin, she remembered that Miss Larolles had been present the first time they had met, and thought it probable they might be acquainted with each other; and therefore, bending forward, she ventured to enquire if she had lately seen that young lady?

Miss Leeson, in a voice alike inexpressive of satisfaction or displeasure, quietly answered, "No, ma'am."

Cecilia, discouraged by this conciseness, was a few minutes silent; but the perseverance of Sir Robert in staring at her, exciting her own in trying to avoid his eyes, she exerted herself so far as to add, "Does Mrs. Mears

Mears expect Miss Larolles here this evening?"

Miss Leeson, without raising her head, gravely replied, "I don't know, ma'am."

All was now to be done over again, and a new subject to be started, for she could suggest nothing further to ask concerning Miss Larolles.

Cecilia had seen little of life, but that little she had well marked, and her observation had taught her, that among fashionable people, public places seemed a never-failing source of conversation and entertainment: upon this topic, therefore, she hoped for better success; and as to those who have spent more time in the country than in London, no place of amusement is so interesting as a theatre, she opened the subject she had so happily suggested, by an enquiry whether any new play had lately come out?

Miss Leeson, with the same dryness, only answered, "Indeed I can't tell."

Another pause now followed, and the spirits of Cecilia were considerably dampt; but happening accidentally to recollect the name of Almack, she presently revived, and congratulating herself that she should now be able to speak of a place too fashionable for disdain, she asked her, in a manner somewhat more assured, if she was a subscriber to his assemblies?

"Yes, ma'am."

"Do you go to them constantly?"

"No, ma'am."

Again they were both silent. And now, tired of finding the ill success of each particular enquiry, she thought a more general one might obtain an answer less laconic, and therefore begged she would inform her what was the most fashionable place of diversion for the present season?

This question, however, cost Miss Leeson no more trouble than any which had preceded it, for she only replied, "Indeed I don't know."

Cecilia now began to sicken of her attempt, and for some minutes to give it up as hopeless; but afterwards, when she reflected how frivolous were the questions she had asked, she felt more inclined to pardon the answers she had received, and in a short time to fancy she had mistaken contempt for stupidity, and to grow less angry with Miss Leeson than ashamed of herself.

This supposition excited her to make yet another trial of her talents for conversation; and therefore, summoning all the courage in her power, she modestly apologised for the liberty she was taking, and then begged her permission to enquire whether there was any thing new in the literary way that she thought worth recommending?

Miss Leeson now turned her eyes towards her, with a look that implied a doubt whether

ther she had heard aright; and when the attentive attitude of Cecilia confirmed her question, surprise for a few instants took place of insensibility, and with rather more spirit than she had yet shewn, she answered, "Indeed I know nothing of the matter."

Cecilia was now utterly disconcerted; and half angry with herself, and wholly provoked with her sullen neighbour, she resolved to let nothing in future provoke her to a similar trial with so unpromising a subject.

She had not, however, much longer to endure the examination of Sir Robert, who being pretty well satisfied with staring, turned upon his heel, and was striding out of the room, when he was stopt by Mr. Gosport, who for some time had been watching him.

Mr. Gosport was a man of good parts, and keen satire; minute in his observations, and ironical in his expressions.

"So you don't play, Sir Robert?" he cried.

"What here? No, I am going to Brookes's."

"But how do you like Harrel's ward? You have taken a pretty good survey of her."

"Why faith I don't know; but not much, I think; she's a devilish fine woman too; but she has no spirit, no life."

"Did you try her? Have you talked to her?"

"Not

"Not I, truly!"

"Nay, then, how do you mean to judge of her?"

"O, faith, that's all over now; one never thinks of talking to the women by way of trying them."

"What other method, then, have you adopted?"

"None."

"None? Why then how do you go on?"

"Why they talk to us. The women take all that trouble upon themselves now."

"And pray how long may you have commenced *fade macaroni?* for this is a part of your character with which I was not acquainted."

"O, hang it, 'tis not from *ton*; no, it's merely from laziness. Who the d—l will fatigue himself with dancing attendance upon the women, when keeping them at a distance makes them dance attendance upon us?"

Then, stalking from him to Mr. Harrel, he took him by the arm, and they left the room together.

Mr. Gosport now advanced to Cecilia, and addressing her so as not to be heard by Miss Leeson, said, "I have been wishing to approach you some time, but the fear that you are already overpowered by the loquacity of your fair neighbour, makes me cautious of attempting to engage you."

"You mean," said Cecilia, "to laugh at

at *my* loquacity, and indeed its ill success has rendered it sufficiently ridiculous."

"Are you, then, yet to learn," cried he, "that there are certain young ladies who make it a rule never to speak but to their own cronies? Of this class is Miss Leeson, and till you get into her particular coterie, you must never expect to hear from her a word of two syllables. The TON misses, as they are called, who now infest the town, are in two divisions, the SUPERCILIOUS, and the VOLUBLE. The SUPERCILIOUS, like Miss Leeson, are silent, scornful, languid, and affected, and disdain all converse but with those of their own set: the VOLUBLE, like Miss Larolles, are flirting, communicative, restless, and familiar, and attack, without the smallest ceremony, every one they think worthy their notice. But this they have in common, that at home they think of nothing but dress, abroad, of nothing but admiration, and that every where they hold in supreme contempt all but themselves."

"Probably, then," said Cecilia, "I have passed, to-night, for one of the VOLUBLES; however, all the advantage has been with the SUPERCILIOUS, for I have suffered a total repulse."

"Are you sure, however, you have not talked too well for her?"

"O, a child of five years old ought to have been whipt for not talking better!"

"But

"But it is not capacity alone you are to consult when you talk with misses of the TON; were their understandings only to be considered, they would indeed be wonderfully easy of access! in order, therefore, to render their commerce somewhat difficult, they will only be pleased by an observance of their humours; which are ever most various and most exuberant where the intellects are weakest and least cultivated. I have, however, a receipt which I have found infallible for engaging the attention of young ladies, of whatsoever character or denomination."

"O, then," cried Cecilia, "pray favour me with it, for I have here an admirable opportunity to try its efficacy."

"I will give it you," he answered, "with full directions. When you meet with a young lady who seems resolutely determined not to speak, or who, if compelled by a direct question to make some answer, drily gives a brief affirmative, or coldly a laconic negative——"

"A case in point!" interrupted Cecilia.

"Well, thus circumstanced," he continued, "the remedy I have to propose consists of three topics of discourse."

"Pray what are they?"

"Dress, public places, and love."

Cecilia, half surprised and half diverted, waited a fuller explanation without giving any interruption.

"These

"These three topics," he continued, "are to answer three purposes, since there are no less than three causes from which the silence of young ladies may proceed: sorrow, affectation, and stupidity."

"Do you then," cried Cecilia, "give nothing at all to modesty?"

"I give much to it," he answered, "as an excuse, nay almost as an equivalent for wit; but for that sullen silence which resists all encouragement, modesty is a mere pretence, not a cause."

"You must, however, be somewhat more explicit, if you mean that I should benefit from your instructions."

"Well then," he answered, "I will briefly enumerate the three causes, with directions for the three methods of cure. To begin with sorrow. The taciturnity which really results from that is attended with an incurable absence of mind, and a total unconsciousness of the observation which it excites; upon this occasion, public places may sometimes be tried in vain, and even dress may fail; but love——"

"Are you sure, then," said Cecilia, with a laugh, "that sorrow has but that one source?"

"By no means," answered he, "for perhaps papa may have been angry, or mama may have been cross; a milliner may have sent

sent a wrong pompoon, or a *chaperon* to an assembly may have been taken ill——"

"Bitter subjects of affliction, indeed! And are these all you allow us?"

"Nay, I speak but of young ladies of fashion, and what of greater importance can befal them? If, therefore, the grief of the fair patient proceeds from papa, mama, or the *chaperon*, then the mention of public places, those endless incentives of displeasure between the old and the young, will draw forth her complaints, and her complaints will bring their own cure, for those who lament find speedy consolation: if the milliner has occasioned the calamity, the discussion of dress will have the same effect; should both these medicines fail, love, as I said before, will be found infallible, for you will then have investigated every subject of uneasiness which a youthful female in high life can experience."

"They are greatly obliged to you," cried Cecilia, bowing, "for granting them motives of sorrow so honouroble, and I thank you in the name of the whole sex."

"You, madam," said he, returning her bow, "are I hope an exception in the happiest way, that of having no sorrow at all. I come, now, to the silence of affectation, which is presently discernable by the roving of the eye round the room to see if it is heeded, by the sedulous care to avoid an acci-

dental

dental smile, and by the variety of disconsolate attitudes exhibited to the beholders. This species of silence has almost without exception its origin in that babyish vanity which is always gratified by exciting attention, without ever perceiving that it provokes contempt. In these cases, as nature is wholly out of the question, and the mind is guarded against its own feelings, dress and public places are almost certain of failing, but here again love is sure to vanquish; as soon as it is named, attention becomes involuntary, and in a short time a struggling simper discomposes the arrangement of the features, and then the business is presently over, for the young lady is either supporting some system, or opposing some proposition, before she is well aware that she has been cheated out of her sad silence at all."

"So much," said Cecilia, "for sorrow and for affectation. Proceed next to stupidity; for that, in all probability, I shall most frequently encounter."

"That always must be heavy work," returned he, "yet the road is plain, though it is all up-hill. Love, here, may be talked of without exciting any emotion, or provoking any reply, and dress may be dilated upon without producing any other effect than that of attracting a vacant stare; but public places are indubitably certain of success. Dull and heavy characters, incapable of animating

mating from wit or from reason, because unable to keep pace with them, and void of all internal sources of entertainment, require the stimulation of shew, glare, noise, and bustle to interest or awaken them. Talk to them of such subjects and they adore you; no matter whether you paint to them joy or horror; let there but be action, and they are content; a battle has charms for them equal to a coronation; and a funeral amuses them as much as a wedding."

"I am much obliged to you," said Cecilia, smiling, "for these instructions; yet I must confess I know not how upon the present occasion to make use of them: public places I have already tried, but tried in vain; dress I dare not mention, as I have not yet learned its technical terms——"

"Well but," interrupted he, "be not desperate, you have yet the third topic unessayed."

"O that," returned she, laughing, "I leave to you!"

"Pardon me," cried he, "love is a source of loquacity only with yourselves: when it is started by men, young ladies dwindle into mere listeners. *Simpering* listeners, I confess; but it is only with one another that you will discuss its merits."

At this time they were interrupted by the approach of Miss Larolles, who tripping towards Cecilia, exclaimed, "Lord, how glad

glad I am to see you! So you would not go to the auction? Well, you had a prodigious loss, I assure you. All the wardrobe was sold, and all Lady Belgrade's trinkets. I never saw such a collection of sweet things in my life. I was ready to cry that I could not bid for half an hundred of them. I declare I was kept in an agony the whole morning. I would not but have been there for the world. Poor Lady Belgrade! you really can't conceive how I was shocked for her. All her beautiful things sold for almost nothing. I assure you if you had seen how they went, you would have lost all patience. It's a thousand pities you were not there."

"On the contrary," said Cecilia, "I think I had a very fortunate escape, for the loss of patience without the acquisition of the trinkets, would have been rather mortifying."

"Yes," said Mr. Gosport; "but when you have lived some time longer in this commercial city, you will find the exchange of patience for mortification the most common and constant traffic among its inhabitants."

"Pray have you been here long?" cried Miss Larolles, "for I have been to twenty places, wondering I did not meet with you before. But whereabouts is Mrs. Mears? O, I see her now; I'm sure there's no mistaking her; I could know her by that old red

red gown half a mile off. Did you ever see such a frightful thing in your life? And it's never off her back. I believe she sleeps in it. I am sure I have seen her in nothing else all winter. It quite tires one's eye. She's a monstrous shocking dresser. But do you know, I have met with the most provoking thing in the world this evening? I declare it has made me quite sick. I was never in such a passion in my life. You can conceive nothing like it."

"Like what," cried Cecilia, laughing, "your passion or your provocation?"

"Why I'll tell you what it was, and then you shall judge if it was not quite past endurance. You must know I commissioned a particular friend of mine, Miss Moffat, to buy me a trimming when she went to Paris; well, she sent it me over about a month ago by Mr. Meadows, and it's the sweetest thing you ever saw in your life; but I would not make it up, because there was not a creature in town, so I thought to bring it out quite new in about a week's time, for you know any thing does till after Christmas. Well, to-night at Lady Jane Dranet's, who should I meet but Miss Moffat! She had been in town some days, but so monstrously engaged, I could never find her at home. Well, I was quite delighted to see her, for you must know she's a prodigious favourite with me; so I ran up to her in a great hurry to shake hands,

hands, and what do you think was the first thing that struck my eyes? Why just such a trimming as my own, upon a nasty odious gown, and half dirty! Can you conceive any thing so distressing? I could have cried with pleasure."

"Why so?" said Cecilia. "If her trimming is dirty, yours will look the more delicate."

"O lord, but it's making it seem quite an old thing! half the town will get something like it. And I quite ruined myself to buy it. I declare I don't think any thing was ever half so mortifying. It distressed me so I could hardly speak to her. If she had stayed a month or two longer I should not have minded it, but it was the cruellest thing in the world to come over just now. I wish the custom-house officers had kept all her clothes till summer."

"The wish is tender, indeed," said Cecilia, "for a *particular friend*."

Mrs. Mears now rising from the card-table, Miss Larolles tript away to pay her compliments to her.

"Here, at least," cried Cecilia, "no receipt seems requisite for the cure of silence! I would have Miss Larolles be the constant companion of Miss Leeson: they could not but agree admirably, since that SUPERCILIOUS young lady seems determined never to speak, and the VOLUBLE Miss Larolles

rolles never to be silent. Were each to borrow something of the other, how greatly would both be the better!"

"The composition would still be a sorry one," answered Mr. Gosport, "for I believe they are equally weak, and equally ignorant; the only difference is, that one, though silly, is quick, the other, though deliberate, is stupid. Upon a short acquaintance, that heaviness which leaves to others the whole weight of discourse, and whole search of entertainment, is the most fatiguing, but, upon a longer intimacy, even that is less irksome and less offensive, than the flippancy which hears nothing but itself."

Mrs. Harrel arose now to depart, and Cecilia, not more tired of the beginning of the evening than entertained with its conclusion, was handed to the carriage by Mr. Arnott.

CHAPTER VI.

A BREAKFAST.

THE next morning, during breakfast, a servant acquainted Cecilia that a young gentleman was in the hall, who begged to speak

speak with her. She desired he might be admitted; and Mrs. Harrel, laughing, asked if she ought not to quit the room; while Mr. Arnott, with even more than his usual gravity, directed his eye towards the door to watch who should enter.

Neither of them, however, received any satisfaction when it was opened, for the gentleman who made his appearance was unknown to both: but great was the amazement of Cecilia, though little her emotion, when she saw Mr. Morrice!

He came forward with an air of the most profound respect for the company in general, and obsequiously advancing to Cecilia, made an earnest enquiry into her health after her journey, and hoped she had heard good news from her friends in the country.

Mrs. Harrel, naturally concluding, both from his visit and behaviour, that he was an acqaintance of some intimacy, very civilly offered him a seat and some breakfast, which, very frankly, he accepted. But Mr. Arnott, who already felt the anxiety of a rising passion which was too full of veneration to be sanguine, looked at him with uneasiness, and waited his departure with impatience.

Cecilia began to imagine he had been commissioned to call upon her with some message from Mr. Monckton, for she knew not how to suppose that merely and acci-

dentally having spent an hour or two in the same room with her, would authorize a visiting acquaintance. Mr. Morrice, however, had a facility the most happy of reconciling his pretensions to his inclination; and therefore she soon found that the apology she had suggested appeared to him unnecessary. To lead, however, to the subject from which she expected his excuse, she enquired how long he had left Suffolk?

"But yesterday noon, ma'am," he answered, "or I should certainly have taken the liberty to wait upon you before."

Cecilia, who had only been perplexing herself to devise some reason why he came at all, now looked at him with a grave surprise, which would totally have abashed a man whose courage had been less, or whose expectations had been greater; but Mr. Morrice, though he hazarded every danger upon the slightest chance of hope, knew too well the weakness of his claims to be confident of success, and had been too familiar with rebuffs to be much hurt by receiving them. He might possibly have something to gain, but he knew he had nothing to lose.

"I had the pleasure," he continued, "to leave all our friends well, except poor Lady Margaret, and she has had an attack of the asthma; yet she would not have a physician, though Mr. Monckton would fain have persuaded her: however, I believe the old lady

knows

knows better things." And he looked archly at Cecilia: but perceiving that the insinuation gave her nothing but disgust, he changed his tone, and added, "It is amazing how well they live together; nobody would imagine the disparity in their years. Poor old lady! Mr. Monckton will really have a great loss of her when she dies."

"A loss of her!" repeated Mrs. Harrel; "I am sure she is an exceeding ill-natured old woman. When I lived at Bury, I was always frightened out of my wits at the sight of her."

"Why, indeed, ma'am," said Morrice, "I must own her appearance is rather against her: I had myself a great aversion to her at first sight. But the house is chearful—very chearful; I like to spend a few days there now and then of all things. Miss Bennet, too, is agreeable enough, and ——"

"Miss Bennet agreeable!" cried Mrs. Harrel; "I think she is the most odious creature I ever knew in my life; a nasty, spiteful old maid!"

"Why indeed, ma'am, as you say," answered Morrice, "she is not very young; and as to her temper, I confess I know very little about it; and Mr. Monckton is likely enough to try it, for he is pretty severe."

"Mr. Monckton," cried Cecilia, extremely provoked at hearing him censured by a man she thought highly honoured in

being permitted to approach him, "whenever *I* have been his guest, has merited from me nothing but praise and gratitude."

"O," cried Morrice eagerly, "there is not a more worthy man in the world; he has so much wit, so much politeness! I don't know a more charming man any where than my friend Mr. Monckton."

Cecilia now perceiving that the opinions of her new acquaintance were as pliant as his bows, determined to pay him no further attention, and hoped by sitting silent to force from him the business of his visit, if any he had, or if, as she now suspected, he had none, to weary him into a retreat.

But this plan, though it would have succeeded with herself, failed with Mr. Morrice, who to a stock of good-humour that made him always ready to oblige others, added an equal portion of insensibility that hardened him against all indignity. Finding, therefore, that Cecilia, to whom his visit was intended, seemed already satisfied with its length, he prudently forbore to torment her; but perceiving that the lady of the house was more accessible, he quickly made a transfer of his attention, and addressed his discourse to her with as much pleasure as if his only view had been to see her, and as much ease as if he had known her all his life.

With Mrs. Harrel this conduct was not inju-

injudicious; she was pleased with his assiduity, amused with his vivacity, and sufficiently satisfied with his understanding. They conversed, therefore, upon pretty equal terms, and neither of them were yet tired, when they were interrupted by Mr. Harrel, who came into the room to ask if they had seen or heard any thing of Sir Robert Floyer?

"No," answered Mrs. Harrel, "nothing at all."

"I wish he was hanged," returned he, "for he has kept me waiting this hour. He made me promise not to ride out till he called, and now he'll stay till the morning is over."

"Pray where does he live, Sir?" cried Morrice, starting from his seat.

"In Cavendish-square, Sir," answered Mr. Harrel, looking at him with much surprise.

Not a word more said Morrice, but scampered out of the room.

"Pray who is this genius?" cried Mr. Harrel, "and what has he run away for?"

"Upon my word I know nothing at all of him," said Mrs. Harrel; "he is a visitor of Miss Beverley's."

"And I, too," said Cecilia, "might almost equally disclaim all knowledge of him; for though I once saw, I never was introduced to him."

She then began a relation of her meeting

him at Mr. Monckton's house, and had hardly concluded it, before again, and quite out of breath, he made his appearance.

"Sir Robert Floyer, Sir," said he to Mr. Harrel, "will be here in two minutes."

"I hope, Sir," said Mr. Harrel, "you have not given yourself the trouble of going to him?"

"No, Sir, it has given me nothing but pleasure; a run these cold mornings is the thing I like best."

"Sir, you are extremely good," said Mr. Harrel, "but I had not the least intention of your taking such a walk upon my account."

He then begged him to be seated, to rest himself, and to take some refreshment; which civilities he received without scruple.

"But, Miss Beverley," said Mr. Harrel, turning to Cecilia, "you don't tell me what you think of my friend?"

"What friend, Sir?"

"Why, Sir Robert Floyer; I observed he never quitted you a moment while he stayed at Mrs. Mears."

"His stay, however, was too short," said Cecilia, "to allow me to form a fair opinion of him."

"But perhaps," cried Morrice, "it was long enough to allow you to form a *foul* one."

Cecilia could not forbear laughing to hear the truth thus accidentally blundered out; but

but Mr. Harrel, looking very little pleased, said, "Surely you can find no fault with him; he is one of the most fashionable men I know."

"My finding fault with him, then," said Cecilia, "will only further prove what I believe is already pretty evident, that I am yet a novice in the art of admiration."

Mr. Arnott, animating at this speech, glided behind her chair, and said, "I knew you could not like him! I knew it from the turn of your mind;—I knew it even from your countenance!"

Soon after Sir Robert Floyer arrived.

"You are a pretty fellow, an't you," cried Mr. Harrel, "to keep me waiting so long?"

"I could not come a moment sooner; I hardly expected to get here at all, for my horse has been so confounded resty I could not tell how to get him along."

"Do you come on horseback through the streets, Sir Robert?" asked Mrs. Harrel.

"Sometimes; when I am lazy. But what the d——l is the matter with him I don't know; he has started at every thing. I suspect there has been some foul play with him."

"Is he at the door, Sir?" cried Morrice.

"Yes," answered Sir Robert.

"Then I'll tell you what's the matter with him in a minute;" and away again ran Morrice.

"What time did you get off last night, Harrel?" said Sir Robert.

"Not very early; but you were too much engaged to miss me. By the way," lowering his voice, "what do you think I lost?"

"I can't tell, indeed, but I know what I gained: I have not had such a run of luck this winter."

They then went up to a window to carry on their enquiries more privately.

At the words *what do you think I lost*, Cecilia, half starting, cast her eyes uneasily upon Mrs. Harrel, but perceived not the least change in her countenance. Mr. Arnott, however, seemed as little pleased as herself, and from a similar sensation looked anxiously at his sister.

Morrice now returning, called out, "He's had a fall, I assure you!"

"Curse him!" cried Sir Robert, "what shall I do now? He cost me the d——l and all of money, and I have not had him a twelvemonth. Can you lend me a horse for this morning, Harrel?"

"No, I have not one that will do for you. You must send to Astley."

"Who can I send? John must take care of this."

"I'll go, Sir," cried Morrice; "if you'll give me the commission."

"By no means, Sir," said Sir Robert, "I can't think of your having such an office."

"It

"It is the thing in the world I like best," answered he; "I understand horses, and had rather go to Astley's than any where."

The matter was now settled in a few minutes, and having received his directions, and an invitation to dinner, Morrice danced off, with an heart yet lighter than his heels.

"Why, Miss Beverley," said Mr. Harrel, "this friend of yours is the most obliging gentleman I ever met with; there was no avoiding asking him to dinner."

"Remember, however," said Cecilia, who was involuntarily diverted at the successful officiousness of her new acquaintance, "that if you receive him henceforth as your guest, he obtains admission through his own merits, and not through my interest."

At dinner, Morrice, who failed not to accept the invitation of Mr. Harrel, was the gayest, and indeed the happiest man in the company: the effort he had made to fasten himself upon Cecilia as an acquaintance, had not, it is true, from herself met with much encouragement; but he knew the chances were against him when he made the trial, and therefore the prospect of gaining admission into such a house as Mr. Harrel's, was not only sufficient to make amends for what scarcely amounted to a disappointment, but a subject of serious comfort from the credit of the connection, and of internal exultation at his own management and address.

In the evening, the ladies, as usual, went to a private assembly, and, as usual, were attended to it by Mr. Arnott. The other gentlemen had engagements elsewhere.

CHAPTER VII.

A PROJECT.

SEVERAL days passed on nearly in the same manner; the mornings were all spent in gossipping, shopping, and dressing, and the evenings were regularly appropriated to public places, or large parties of company.

Meanwhile Mr. Arnott lived almost entirely in Portman-square; he slept, indeed, at his own lodgings, but he boarded wholly with Mr. Harrel, whose house he never for a moment quitted till night, except to attend Cecilia and his sister in their visitings and rambles.

Mr. Arnott was a young man of unexceptionable character, and of a disposition mild, serious, and benignant: his principles and blameless conduct obtained the universal esteem of the world, but his manners, which

which were rather too precise, joined to an uncommon gravity of countenance and demeanour, made his society rather permitted as a duty, than sought as a pleasure.

The charms of Cecilia had forcibly, suddenly and deeply penetrated his heart; he only lived in her presence, away from her he hardly existed: the emotions she excited were rather those of adoration than of love, for he gazed upon her beauty till he thought her more than human, and hung upon her accents till all speech seemed impertinent to him but her own. Yet so small were his expectations of success, that not even to his sister did he hint at the situation of his heart: happy in an easy access to her, he contented himself with seeing, hearing, and watching her, beyond which bounds he formed not any plan, and scarce indulged any hope.

Sir Robert Floyer, too, was a frequent visitor in Portman-square, where he dined almost daily. Cecilia was chagrined at seeing so much of him, and provoked to find herself almost constantly the object of his unrestrained examination; she was, however, far more seriously concerned for Mrs. Harrel, when she discovered that this favourite friend of her husband was an unprincipled spendthrift, and an extravagant gamester: for as he was the inseparable companion of Mr. Harrel, she dreaded the

consequence both of his influence and his example.

She saw too, with an amazement that daily increased, the fatigue, yet fascination of a life of pleasure: Mr. Harrel seemed to consider his own house merely as an Hôtel, where at any hour of the night he might disturb the family to claim admittance, where letters and messages might be left for him, where he dined when no other dinner was offered him, and where, when he made an appointment, he was to be met with. His lady, too, though more at home, was not therefore more solitary; her acquaintance were numerous, expensive, and idle, and every moment not actually spent in company, was scrupulously devoted to making arrangements for that purpose.

In a short time Cecilia, who every day had hoped that the next would afford her greater satisfaction, but who every day found the present no better than the former, began to grow weary of eternally running the same round, and to sicken at the irksome repetition of unremitting yet uninteresting dissipation. She saw nobody she wished to see, as she had met with nobody for whom she could care; for though sometimes those with whom she mixed appeared to be amiable, she knew that their manners, like their persons, were in their best array, and therefore she had too much understanding to judge

judge decisively of their characters. But what chiefly damped her hopes of forming a friendship with any of the new acquaintance to whom she was introduced, was the observation she herself made, how ill the coldness of their hearts accorded with the warmth of their professions: upon every first meeting, the civilities which were shewn her, flattered her into believing she had excited a partiality that a very little time would ripen into affection; the next meeting commonly confirmed the expectation; but the third, and every future one, regularly destroyed it. She found that time added nothing to their fondness, nor intimacy to their sincerity; that the interest in her welfare which appeared to be taken at first sight, seldom, with whatever reason, encreased, and often without any abated; that the distinction she at first met with, was no effusion of kindness, but of curiosity, which is scarcely sooner gratified than satiated; and that those who lived always the life into which she had only lately been initiated, were as much harassed with it as herself, though less spirited to relinquish, and more helpless to better it; and that they coveted nothing but what was new, because they had experienced the insufficiency of whatever was familiar.

She began now to regret the loss she sustained in quitting the neighbourhood, and being deprived of the conversation of Mr. Monckton,

Monckton, and yet more earnestly to miss the affection and sigh for the society of Mrs. Charlton, the lady with whom she had long and happily resided at Bury; for she was very soon compelled to give up all expectation of renewing the felicity of her earlier years, by being restored to the friendship of Mrs. Harrel, in whom she had mistaken the kindness of childish intimacy for the sincerity of chosen affection; and though she saw her credulous error with mortification and displeasure, she regretted it with tenderness and sorrow. "What, at last," cried she, "is human felicity, who has tasted, and where is it to be found? If I, who, to others, seem marked out for even a partial possession of it,—distinguished by fortune, caressed by the world, brought into the circle of high life, and surrounded with splendour, seek without finding, yet losing, scarce know how I miss it!"

Ashamed upon reflection to believe she was considered as an object of envy by others, while repining and discontented herself, she determined no longer to be the only one insensible to the blessings within her reach, but by projecting and adopting some plan of conduct, better suited to her taste and feelings than the frivolous insipidity of her present life, to make at once a more spirited and more worthy use of the affluence, freedom, and power which she possessed.

A scheme

A scheme of happiness at once rational and refined soon presented itself to her imagination. She purposed, for the basis of her plan, to become mistress of her own time, and with this view, to drop all idle and uninteresting acquaintance, who, while they contribute neither to use nor pleasure, make so large a part of the community, that they may properly be called the underminers of existence: she could then shew some taste and discernment in her choice of friends, and she resolved to select such only as by their piety could elevate her mind, by their knowledge improve her understanding, or by their accomplishments and manners delight her affections. This regulation, if strictly adhered to, would soon relieve her from the fatigue of receiving many visitors, and therefore she might have all the leisure she could desire for the pursuit of her favourite studies, music and reading.

Having thus, from her own estimation of human perfection, culled whatever was noblest for her society, and from her own ideas of sedentary enjoyments, arranged the occupations of her hours of solitude, she felt fully satisfied with the portion of happiness which her scheme promised to herself, and began next to consider what was due from her to the world.

And not without trembling did she then look forward to the claims which the splen-

did income she was soon to possess would call upon her to discharge. A strong sense of DUTY, a fervent desire to ACT RIGHT, were the ruling characteristics of her mind: her affluence she therefore considered as a debt contracted with the poor; and her independence, as a tie upon her liberality to pay it with interest.

Many and various, then, soothing to her spirit and grateful to her sensibility, were the scenes which her fancy delineated; now she supported an orphan, now softened the sorrows of a widow, now snatched from iniquity the feeble trembler at poverty, and now rescued from shame the proud struggler with disgrace. The prospect at once exalted her hopes, and enraptured her imagination; she regarded herself as an agent of Charity, and already in idea anticipated the rewards of a good and faithful delegate: so animating are the designs of disinterested benevolence! so pure is the bliss of intellectual philanthropy!

Not immediately, however, could this plan be put in execution; the society she meant to form could not be selected in the house of another, where, though to some she might shew a preference, there were none she could reject: nor had she yet the power to indulge, according to the munificence of her wishes, the extensive generosity she projected: these purposes demanded an house of her

her own, and the unlimited disposal of her fortune, neither of which she could claim till she became of age. That period, however, was only eight months distant, and she pleased herself with the intention of meliorating her plan in the mean time, and preparing to put it in practice.

But though, in common with all the race of still-expecting man, she looked for that happiness in the time to come which the present failed to afford, she had yet the spirit and good sense to determine upon making every effort in her power, to render her immediate way of life more useful and contented.

Her first wish therefore, now, was to quit the house of Mr. Harrel, where she neither met with entertainment nor instruction, but was perpetually mortified by seeing the total indifference of the friend in whose society she had hoped for nothing but affection.

The will of her uncle, though it obliged her while under-age to live with one of her guardians, left her at liberty to chuse and to change amongst them according to her wishes or convenience: she determined, therefore, to make a visit herself to each of them, to observe their manners and way of life, and then, to the best of her judgment, decide with which she could be most contented: resolving, however, not to hint at her intention till it was ripe for execution, and then honestly to confess the reasons of her retreat.

She

She had acquainted them both of her journey to town the morning after her arrival. She was almost an entire stranger to each of them, as she had not seen Mr. Briggs since she was nine years old, nor Mr. Delvile within the time she could remember.

The very morning that she had settled her proceedings for the arrangement of this new plan, she intended to request the use of Mrs. Harrel's carriage, and to make, without delay, the visits preparatory to her removal: but when she entered the parlour upon a summons to breakfast, her eagerness to quit the house gave way, for the present, to the pleasure she felt at the sight of Mr. Monckton, who was just arrived from Suffolk.

She expressed her satisfaction in the most lively terms, and scrupled not to tell him she had not once been so much pleased since her journey to town, except at her first meeting with Mrs. Harrel.

Mr. Monckton, whose delight was infinitely superior to her own, and whose joy in seeing her was redoubled by the affectionate frankness of her reception, stifled the emotions to which her sight gave rise, and denying himself the solace of expressing his feelings, seemed much less charmed than herself at the meeting and suffered no word nor look to escape him, beyond what could be authorised by friendly civility.

He then renewed with Mrs. Harrel an acquaint-

acquaintance which had been formed before her marriage, but which he had dropt when her distance from Cecilia, upon whose account alone he had thought it worth cultivation, made it no longer of use to him. She afterwards introduced her brother to him; and a conversation very interesting to both the ladies took place, concerning several families with which they had been formerly connected, as well as the neighbourhood at large in which they had lately dwelt.

Very little was the share taken by Mr. Arnott in these accounts and enquiries; the unaffected joy with which Cecilia had received Mr. Monckton, had struck him with a sensation of envy as involuntary as it was painful: he did not, indeed, suspect that gentleman's secret views; no reason for suspicion was obvious, and his penetration sunk not deeper than appearances; he knew, too, that he was married, and therefore no jealousy occurred to him; but still she had smiled upon him!—and he felt that to purchase for himself a smile of so much sweetness, he would have sacrificed almost all else that was valuable to him upon earth.

With an attention infinitely more accurate, Mr. Monckton had returned his observations. The uneasiness of his mind was apparent, and the anxious watchfulness of his eyes plainly manifested whence it arose. From a situation, indeed, which permitted an intercourse

tercourse the most constant and unrestrained with such an object as Cecilia, nothing less could be expected, and therefore he considered his admiration as inevitable; all that remained to be discovered, was the reception it had met from his fair enslaver. Nor was he here long in doubt; he soon saw that she was not merely free from all passion herself, but had so little watched Mr. Arnott as to be unconscious she had inspired any.

Yet was his own serenity, though apparently unmoved, little less disturbed in secret than that of his rival; he did not think him a formidable candidate, but he dreaded the effect of intimacy, fearing she might first grow accustomed to his attentions, and then become pleased with them: he apprehended, also, the influence of his sister, and of Mr. Harrel in his favour; and though he had no difficulty to persuade himself that any offer he might now make would be rejected without hesitation, he knew too well the insidious properties of perseverance, to see him, without inquietude, situated so advantageously.

The morning was far advanced before he took leave, yet he found no opportunity of discoursing with Cecilia, though he impatiently desired to examine into the state of her mind, and to discover whether her London journey had added any fresh difficulties to the success of his long-concerted scheme.

But

But as Mrs. Harrel invited him to dinner, he hoped the afternoon would be more propitious to his wishes.

Cecilia, too, was eager to communicate to him her favourite project, and to receive his advice with respect to its execution. She had long been used to his counsel, and she was now more than ever solicitous to obtain it, because she considered him as the only person in London who was interested in her welfare.

He saw, however, no promise of better success when he made his appearance at dinner time, for not only Mr. Arnott was already arrived, but Sir Robert Floyer; and he found Cecilia so much the object of their mutual attention, that he had still less chance than in the morning of speaking to her unheard.

Yet was he not idle; the sight of Sir Robert gave abundant employment to his penetration, which was immediately at work, to discover the motive of his visit: but this, with all his sagacity, was not easily decided; for though the constant direction of his eyes towards Cecilia, proved, at least, that he was not insensible of her beauty, his carelessness whether or not she was hurt by his examination, the little pains he took to converse with her, and the invariable assurance and negligence of his manners, seemed

strongly

strongly to demonstrate an indifference to the sentiments he inspired, totally incompatible with the solicitude of affection.

In Cecilia he had nothing to observe but what his knowledge of her character prepared him to expect, a shame no less indignant than modest at the freedom with which she saw herself surveyed.

Very little, therefore, was the satisfaction which this visit procured him, for soon after dinner the ladies retired; and as they had an early engagement for the evening, the gentlemen received no summons to their tea-table. But he contrived, before they quitted the room, to make an appointment for attending them the next morning to a rehearsal of a new serious Opera.

He stayed not after their departure longer than decency required; for too much in earnest was his present pursuit, to fit him for such conversation as the house in Cecilia's absence could afford him.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN OPERA REHEARSAL.

THE next day, between eleven and twelve o'clock, Mr. Monckton was again in Portman-square; he found, as he expected, both the ladies, and he found, as he feared, Mr. Arnott prepared to be of their party. He had, however, but little time to repine at this intrusion, before he was disturbed by another; for, in a few minutes, they were joined by Sir Robert Floyer, who also declared his intention of accompanying them to the Haymarket.

Mr. Monckton, to disguise his chagrin, pretended he was in great haste to set off, lest they should be too late for the overture: they were, therefore, quitting the breakfast room, when they were stopt by the appearance of Mr. Morrice.

The surprize which the sight of him gave to Mr. Monckton was extreme; he knew that he was unacquainted with Mr. Harrel, for he remembered they were strangers to each other when they lately met at his house; he concluded, therefore, that Cecilia was the

the object of his visit, but he could frame no conjecture under what pretence.

The easy terms upon which he seemed with all the family, by no means diminished his amazement; for when Mrs. Harrel expressed some concern that she was obliged to go out, he gaily begged her not to mind him, assuring her he could not have stayed two minutes, and promising, unasked, to call again the next day: and when she added, "We would not hurry away so, only we are going to a rehearsal of an Opera," he exclaimed with quickness, "A rehearsal!—are you really? I have a great mind to go too!"

Then, perceiving Mr. Monckton, he bowed to him with great respect, and enquired, with no little solemnity, how he had left Lady Margaret, hoped she was perfectly recovered from her late indisposition, and asked sundry questions with regard to her plan for the winter.

This discourse was ill constructed for rendering his presence desirable to Mr. Monckton; he answered him very drily, and again pressed their departure.

"O," cried Morrice, "there's no occasion for such haste; the rehearsal does not begin till one."

"You are mistaken, Sir!" said Mr. Monckton; "it is to begin at twelve o'clock."

"O,

"O, ay, very true," returned Morrice; "I had forgot the dances, and I suppose they are to be rehearsed first. Pray, Miss Beverley, did you ever see any dances rehearsed?"

"No, Sir."

"You'll be excessively entertained, then, I assure you. It's the most comical thing in the world to see those signores and signoras cutting capers in a morning. And the *figuranti* will divert you beyond measure; you never saw such a shabby set in your life: but the most amusing thing is to look in their faces, for all the time they are jumping and skipping about the stage as if they could not stand still for joy, they look as sedate and as dismal as if they were so many undertaker's men."

"Not a word against dancing!" cried Sir Robert, "it's the only thing carries one to the Opera; and I am sure it's the only thing one minds at it."

The two ladies were then handed to Mrs. Harrel's *vis-à-vis*; and the gentlemen, joined without further ceremony by Mr. Morrice, followed them to the Haymarket.

The rehearsal was not begun, and Mrs. Harrel and Cecilia secured themselves a box upon the stage, from which the gentlemen of their party took care not to be very distant.

They were soon perceived by Mr. Gos-

port, who instantly entered into conversation with Cecilia. Miss Larolles, who, with some other ladies, came soon after into the next box, looked out to curtesy and nod, with her usual readiness, at Mrs. Harrel, but took not any notice of Cecilia, though she made the first advances.

"What's the matter now?" cried Mr. Gosport; "have you affronted your little prattling friend?"

"Not with my own knowledge," answered Cecilia; "perhaps she does not recollect me."

Just then Miss Larolles, tapping at the door, came in from the next box to speak to Mrs. Harrel; with whom she stood chatting and laughing some minutes, without seeming to perceive that Cecilia was of her party.

"Why what have you done to the poor girl?" whispered Mr. Gosport; "did you talk more than herself when you saw her last?"

"Would that have been possible?" cried Cecilia. "However, I still fancy she does not know me."

She then stood up, which making Miss Larolles involuntarily turn towards her, she again curtseyed; a civility which that young lady scarce deigned to return, before, bridling with an air of resentment, she hastily looked another way, and then, nodding good-humouredly

mouredly at Mrs. Harrel, hurried back to her party.

Cecilia, much amazed, said to Mr. Gosport, "See now how great was our presumption in supposing this young lady's loquacity always at our devotion!"

"Ah, Madam!" cried he, laughing, "there is no permanency, no consistency in the world! no, not even in the tongue of a VOLUBLE! and if that fails, upon what may we depend?"

"But seriously," said Cecilia, "I am sorry I have offended her, and the more because I so little know how, that I can offer her no apology."

"Will you appoint me your envoy? Shall I demand the cause of these hostilities?"

She thanked him, and he followed Miss Larolles; who was now addressing herself with great earnestness to Mr. Meadows, the gentleman with whom she was conversing when Cecilia first saw her in Portman-square. He stopt a moment to let her finish her speech, which, with no little spirit, she did in these words, "I never knew any thing like it in my life; but I shan't put up with such airs, I assure her!"

Mr. Meadows made not any other return to her harangue, but stretching himself with a languid smile and yawning: Mr. Gosport, therefore, seizing the moment of cessation,

said, "Miss Larolles, I hear a strange report about you."

"Do you," returned she, with quickness; "pray what is it? something monstrous impertinent, I dare say;—however, I assure you it i'n't true."

"Your assurance," cried he, "carries conviction indisputable, for the report was that you had left off talking."

"O, was that all?" cried she, disappointed; "I thought it had been something about Mr. Sawyer, for I declare I have been plagued so about him, I am quite sick of his name."

"And for my part, I never heard it! so fear nothing from me upon his account."

"Lord, Mr. Gosport, how can you say so! I am sure you must know about the festino that night, for it was all over the town in a moment."

"What festino?"

"Well, only conceive how provoking! —Why, I know nothing else was talked of for a month!"

"You are most formidably stout this morning! It is not two minutes since I saw you fling the gauntlet at Miss Beverley, and yet you are already prepared for another antagonist."

"O, as to Miss Beverley, I must really beg you not to mention her; she has behaved so imperti-

impertinently, that I don't ever intend to speak to her again."

"Why, what has she done?"

"O she's been so rude you've no notion. I'll tell you how it was. You must know I met her at Mrs. Harrel's the day she came to town, and the very next morning I waited on her myself, for I would not send a ticket, because I really wished to be civil to her; well, the day after, she never came near me, though I called upon her again; however, I did not take any notice of that; but when the third day came, and I found she had not even sent me a ticket, I thought it monstrous ill bred indeed; and now there has past more than a week, and yet she has never called: so I suppose she don't like me; so I shall drop her acquaintance."

Mr. Gosport, satisfied now with the subject of her complaint, returned to Cecilia, and informed her of the heavy charge which was brought against her.

"I am glad, at least, to know my crime," said she; "for otherwise I should certainly have sinned on in ignorance, as I must confess I never thought of returning her visits: but even if I had, I should not have supposed I had yet lost much time."

"I beg your pardon there," said Mrs. Harrel; "a first visit ought to be returned always by the third day."

"Then have I an unanswerable excuse," said Cecilia; "for I remember that on the third day I saw her at your house."

"O that's nothing at all to the purpose; you should have waited upon her, or sent her a ticket, just the same as if you had not seen her."

The overture was now begun, and Cecilia declined any further conversation. This was the first Opera she had ever heard, yet she was not wholly a stranger to Italian compositions, having assiduously studied music from a natural love of the art, attended all the best concerts her neighbourhood afforded, and regularly received from London the works of the best masters. But the little skill she had thus gained, served rather to increase, than to lessen the surprise with which she heard the present performance—a surprise of which the discovery of her own ignorance made not the least part. Unconscious from the little she had acquired how much was to be learnt, she was astonished to find the inadequate power of written music to convey any idea of vocal abilities: with just knowledge enough, therefore, to understand something of the difficulties, and feel much of the merit, she gave to the whole Opera an avidity of attention almost painful from its own eagerness.

But both the surprise and the pleasure which she received from the performance

in

in general, were faint, cold, and languid, compared to the strength of those emotions when excited by Signore Pacchierotti in particular; and though not half the excellencies of that superior singer were necessary either to amaze or charm her unaccustomed ears, though the refinement of his taste and masterly originality of his genius, to be praised as they deserved, called for the judgment and knowledge of professors, yet a natural love of music in some measure supplied the place of cultivation, and what she could neither explain nor understand, she could feel and enjoy.

The Opera was Artaserse; and the pleasure she received from the music was much augmented by her previous acquaintance with that interesting drama; yet, as to all noviciates in science, whatever is least complicated is most pleasing, she found herself by nothing so deeply impressed, as by the plaintive and beautiful simplicity with which Pacchierotti uttered the affecting repetition of *sono innocente!* his voice, always either sweet or impassioned, delivered those words in a tone of softness, pathos, and sensibility, that struck her with a sensation not more new than delightful.

But though she was, perhaps, the only person thus astonished, she was by no means the only one enraptured; for, notwithstanding she was too earnestly engaged to remark

the company in general, she could not avoid taking notice of an old gentleman who stood by one of the side scenes, against which he leant his head in a manner that concealed his face, with an evident design to be wholly absorbed in listening: and during the songs of Pacchierotti he sighed so deeply, that Cecilia, struck by his uncommon sensibility to the power of music, involuntarily watched him, whenever her mind was sufficiently at liberty to attend to any emotions but its own.

As soon as the rehearsal was over, the gentlemen of Mrs. Harrel's party crowded before her box; and Cecilia then perceived that the person whose musical enthusiasm had excited her curiosity, was the same old gentleman whose extraordinary behaviour had so much surprised her at the house of Mr. Monckton. Her desire to obtain some information concerning him again reviving, she was beginning to make fresh enquiries, when she was interrupted by the approach of Captain Aresby.

That gentleman advancing to her with a smile of the extremest self-complacency, after hoping, in a low voice, he had the honour of seeing her well, exclaimed, "How wretchedly empty is the town! petrifying to a degree! I believe you do not find yourself at present *obsedé* by too much company?"

"At

"*At present*, I believe the contrary!" cried Mr. Gosport.

"Really!" said the captain, unsuspicious of his sneer, "I protest I have hardly seen a soul. Have you tried the Pantheon yet, ma'am?"

"No, sir."

"Nor I: I don't know whether people go there this year. It is not a favourite *spectacle* with me; that sitting to hear the music is a horrid bore. Have you done the Festino the honour to look in there yet?"

"No, sir."

"Permit me, then, to have the honour to beg you will try it."

"O, ay, true," cried Mrs. Harrel; "I have really used you very ill about that; I should have got you in for a subscriber: but Lord, I have done nothing for you yet, and you never put me in mind. There's the ancient music, and Abel's concert;—as to the Opera, we may have a box between us;—but there's the ladies concert we must try for; and there's—O Lord, fifty other places we must think of!"

"Oh times of folly and dissipation!" exclaimed a voice at some distance; "Oh mignions of idleness and luxury! What next will ye invent for the perdition of your time! How yet further will ye proceed in the annihilation of virtue!"

Every body stared; but Mrs. Harrel

coolly said, "Dear, it's only the man-hater!"

"The man-hater?" repeated Cecilia, who found that the speech was made by the object of her former curiosity; "is that the name by which he is known?"

"He is known by fifty names," said Mr. Monckton; "his friends call him the *moralist*; the young ladies, the *crazy man*; the macaronies, the *bore*; in short, he is called by any and every name but his own."

"He is a most petrifying wretch, I assure you," said the Captain; "I am *obsedé* by him *partout*; if I had known he had been so near, I should certainly have said nothing."

"That you have done so well," cried Mr. Gosport, "that if you had known it the whole time, you could have done it no better."

The Captain, who had not heard this speech, which was rather made at him than to him, continued his address to Cecilia: "Give me leave to have the honour of hoping you intend to honour our select masquerade at the Pantheon with your presence. We shall have but 500 tickets, and the subscription will only be three guineas and a half."

"Oh objects of penury and want!" again exclaimed the incognito; "Oh vassals of famine and distress! come and listen to this wantonness of wealth! come, naked and breadless as ye are, and learn how that money

is consumed which to you might bring raiment and food!"

"That strange wretch," said the Captain, "ought really to be confined; I have had the honour to be *degouté* by him so often, that I think him quite obnoxious. I make it a principle to seal up my lips the moment I perceive him."

"Where is it, then," said Cecilia, "that you have so often met him?"

"O," answered the Captain, "*partout*; there is no greater bore about town. But the time I found him most petrifying was once when I happened to have the honour of dancing with a very young lady, who was but just come from a boarding-school, and whose friends had done me the honour to fix upon me upon the principle of first bringing her out: and while I was doing *mon possible* for killing the time, he came up, and, in his particular manner, told her I had no meaning in any thing I said! I must own I never felt more tempted to be *enragé* with a person in years, in my life."

Mr. Arnott now brought the ladies word that their carriage was ready, and they quitted their box: but as Cecilia had never before seen the interior parts of a theatre, Mr. Monckton, hoping while they loitered to have an opportunity of talking with her, asked Morrice why he did not *shew the lyons?* Morrice, always happy in being employed,

declared it was *just the thing he liked best*, and begged permission to do the honours to Mrs. Harrel, who, ever eager in the search of amusement, willingly accepted his offer.

They all, therefore, marched upon the stage, their own party now being the only one that remained.

"We shall make a triumphal entry here," cried Sir Robert Floyer; "the very tread of the stage half tempts me to turn actor."

"You are a rare man," said Mr. Gosport, "if, at your time of life, that is a turn not already taken."

"My time of life!" repeated he; "what do you mean by that? do you take me for an old man?"

"No, Sir, but I take you to be past childhood, and, consequently, to have served your apprenticeship to the actors you have mixed with on the great stage of the world, and, for some years at least, to have set up for yourself."

"Come," cried Morrice, "let's have a little spouting; 'twill make us warm."

"Yes," said Sir Robert, "if we spout to an animating object. If Miss Beverley will be Juliet, I am Romeo at her service."

At this moment the incognito, quitting the corner in which he had planted himself, came suddenly forward, and standing before the whole group, cast upon Cecilia a look of much compassion, and called out, "Poor simple

simple victim! hast thou already so many pursuers? yet seest not that thou art marked for sacrifice! yet knowest not that thou art destined for prey!"

Cecilia, extremely struck by this extraordinary address, stopt short, and looked much disturbed; which, when he perceived, he added, "Let the danger, not the warning affect you! discard the sycophants that surround you, seek the virtuous, relieve the poor, and save yourself from the impending destruction of unfeeling prosperity!"

Having uttered these words with vehemence and authority, he sternly passed them, and disappeared.

Cecilia, too much astonished for speech, stood for some time immoveable, revolving in her mind various conjectures upon the meaning of an exhortation so strange and so urgent.

Nor was the rest of the company much less discomposed: Sir Robert, Mr. Monckton, and Mr. Arnott, each conscious of their own particular plans, were each apprehensive that the warning pointed at himself: Mr. Gosport was offended at being included in the general appellation of sycophants; Mrs. Harrel was provoked at being interrupted in her ramble; and Captain Aresby, sickening at the very sight of him, retreated the moment he came forth.

"For Heaven's sake," cried Cecilia, when somewhat recovered from her consternation,

"who

"who can this be, and what can he mean? You, Mr. Monckton, must surely know something of him; it was at your house I first saw him."

"Indeed," answered Mr. Monckton, "I knew almost nothing of him then, and I am but little better informed now. Belfield picked him up somewhere, and desired to bring him to my house: he called him by the name of Albany: I found him a most extraordinary character; and Belfield, who is a worshipper of originality, was very fond of him."

"He's a devilish crabbed old fellow," cried Sir Robert; "and if he goes on much longer at this confounded rate, he stands a very fair chance of getting his ears cropt."

"He is a man of the most singular conduct I have ever met with," said Mr. Gosport; "he seems to hold mankind in abhorrence, yet he is never a moment alone, and at the same time that he intrudes himself into all parties, he associates with none: he is commonly a stern and silent observer of all that passes; or when he speaks, it is but to utter some sentence of rigid morality, or some bitterness of indignant reproof."

The carriage was now again announced, and Mr. Monckton taking Cecilia's hand, while Mr. Morrice secured to himself the honour of Mrs. Harrel's, Sir Robert and Mr. Gosport made their bows and departed. But though they had now quitted the stage,

and

and arrived at the head of a small stair-case by which they were to descend out of the theatre, Mr. Monckton, finding all his tormentors retired, except Mr. Arnott, whom he hoped to elude, could not resist making one more attempt for a few moments conversation with Cecilia; and, therefore, again applying to Morrice, he called out, "I don't think you have shewn the ladies any of the contrivances behind the scenes."

"True," cried Morrice, "no more I have; suppose we go back?"

"I shall like it vastly," said Mrs. Harrel; "and back they returned."

Mr. Monckton now soon found an opportunity to say to Cecilia, "Miss Beverley, what I foresaw has exactly come to pass; you are surrounded by selfish designers, by interested, double-minded people, who have nothing at heart but your fortune, and whose mercenary views, if you are not guarded against them—"

Here a loud scream from Mrs. Harrel interrupted his speech; Cecilia, much alarmed, turned from him to enquire the cause, and Mr. Monckton was obliged to follow her example: but his mortification was almost intolerable when he saw that lady in a violent fit of laughter, and found her scream was only occasioned by seeing Mr. Morrice, in his diligence to do the honours, pull upon his own head one of the side scenes!

There

There was now no possibility of proposing any farther delay; but Mr. Monckton, in attending the ladies to their carriage, was obliged to have recourse to his utmost discretion and forbearance, in order to check his desire of reprimanding Morrice for his blundering officiousness.

Dressing, dining with company at home, and then going out with company abroad, filled up, as usual, the rest of the day.

CHAPTER IX.

A SUPPLICATION.

THE next morning Cecilia, at the repeated remonstrances of Mrs. Harrel, consented to call upon Miss Larolles. She felt the impracticability of beginning at present the alteration in her way of life she had projected, and therefore thought it most expedient to assume no singularity, till her independency should enable her to support it with consistency; yet greater than ever was her internal eagerness to better satisfy her inclination and her conscience in the disposition of her time, and the distribution of her wealth, since she had heard the emphatic charge of her unknown Mentor.

Mrs.

Mrs. Harrel declined accompanying her in this visit, because she had appointed a surveyor to bring a plan for the inspection of Mr. Harrel and herself, of a small temporary building, to be erected at Violet-Bank, for the purpose of performing plays in private the ensuing Easter.

When the street door was opened for her to get into the carriage, she was struck with the appearance of an elderly woman who was standing at some distance, and seemed shivering with cold, and who, as she descended the steps, joined her hands in an act of supplication, and advanced nearer to the carriage.

Cecilia stopt to look at her: her dress, though parsimonious, was too neat for a beggar; and she considered a moment what she could offer her. The poor woman continued to move forward, but with a slowness of pace that indicated extreme weakness; and, as she approached and raised her head, she exhibited a countenance so wretched, and a complexion so sickly, that Cecilia was impressed with horror at the sight.

With her hands still joined, and a voice that seemed fearful of its own sound, "Oh, madam," she cried, "that you would but hear me!"

"Hear you!" repeated Cecilia, hastily feeling for her purse, "most certainly; and tell me how I shall assist you?"

"Heaven

"Heaven bless you for speaking so kindly, madam!" cried the woman with a voice more assured; "I was sadly afraid you would be angry, but I saw the carriage at the door, and I thought I would try; for I could be no worse; and distress, madam, makes very bold."

"Angry!" said Cecilia, taking a crown from her purse; "no, indeed!—who could see such wretchedness, and feel any thing but pity!"

"Oh, madam," returned the poor woman, "I could almost cry to hear you talk so, though I never thought to cry again, since I left it off for my poor Billy!"

"Have you, then, lost a son?"

"Yes, madam; but he was a great deal too good to live, so I have quite left off grieving for him now."

"Come in, good woman," said Cecilia; "it is too cold to stand here, and you seem half starved already: come in, and let me have some talk with you."

She then gave orders that the carriage should be driven round the square till she was ready, and making the woman follow her into a parlour, desired to know what she should do for her: changing, while she spoke, from a movement of increasing compassion, the crown which she held in her hand for double that sum.

"You can do every thing, madam," she answered,

answered, " if you will but plead for us to his honour: he little thinks of our distress, because he has been afflicted with none himself; and I would not be so troublesome to him, but indeed, indeed, madam, we are quite pinched for want !"

Cecilia, struck with the words *he little thinks of our distress, because he has been afflicted with none himself*, felt again ashamed of the smallness of her intended donation, and taking from her purse another half guinea, said, " Will this assist you ? Will a guinea be sufficient for the present ?"

" I humbly thank you, madam," said the woman, curtseying low ; " shall I give you a receipt ?"

" A receipt !" cried Cecilia, with emotion, " for what ? Alas, our accounts are by no means balanced ! but I shall do more for you, if I find you as deserving an object as you seem to be."

" You are very good, madam ; but I only meant a receipt in part of payment."

" Payment for what ? I don't understand you."

" Did his honour never tell you, madam, of our account ?"

" What account ?"

" Our bill, madam, for work done to the new temple at Violet-Bank : it was the last great work my poor husband was able to do,

do, for it was there he met with his misfortune."

"What bill? What misfortune?" cried Cecilia; "What had your husband to do at Violet Bank?"

"He was the carpenter, madam. I thought you might have seen poor Hill the carpenter there."

"No, I never was there myself. Perhaps you mistake me for Mrs. Harrel."

"Why sure, madam, a'n't you his honour's lady?"

"No. But tell me, what is this bill?"

"'Tis a bill madam, for very hard work, for work, madam, which I am sure will cost my husband his life; and though I have been after his honour night and day to get it, and sent him letters and petitions with an account of our misfortunes, I have never received so much as a shilling! and now the servants won't even let me wait in the hall to speak to him. Oh, madam! you who seem so good, plead to his honour in our behalf! tell him my poor husband cannot live! tell him my children are starving! and tell him my poor Billy, that used to help to keep us, is dead, and that all the work I can do by myself is not enough to maintain us!"

"Good Heaven!" cried Cecilia, extremely moved, "is it then your own money for which you sue thus humbly?"

"Yes,

"Yes, madam, for my own just and honest money, as his honour knows, and will tell you himself."

"Impossible!" cried Cecilia, "he cannot know it; but I will take care he shall soon be informed of it. How much is the bill?"

"Two-and-twenty pounds, madam."

"What, no more?"

"Ah, madam, you gentlefolks little think how much that is to poor people! A hard-working family, like mine, madam, with the help of 20*l.* will go on for a long while quite in paradise."

"Poor worthy woman!" cried Cecilia, whose eyes were filled with tears of compassion, "if 20*l.* will place you in paradise, and that 20*l.* only your just right, it is hard, indeed, that you should be kept without it; especially when your debtors are too affluent to miss it. Stay here a few moments, and I will bring you the money immediately."

Away she flew, and returned to the breakfast room, but found there only Mr. Arnott, who told her that Mr. Harrel was in the library, with his sister and some gentlemen. Cecilia briefly related her business, and begged he would inform Mr. Harrel she wished to speak to him directly. Mr. Arnott shook his head, but obeyed.

They returned together, and immediately, "Miss Beverley," cried Mr. Harrel, gaily,

"I am glad you are not gone, for we want much to consult with you. Will you come up stairs?"

"Presently," answered she; "but first I must speak to you about a poor woman with whom I have accidentally been talking, who has begged me to intercede with you to pay a little debt that she thinks you have forgotten, but that probably you have never heard mentioned."

"A debt!" cried he, with an immediate change of countenance, "to whom?"

"Her name, I think, is Hill; she is wife to the carpenter you employed about a new temple at Violet-Bank."

"O what—what that woman?—Well, well, I'll see she shall be paid. Come, let us go to the library."

"What, with my commission so ill executed? I promised to petition for her to have the money directly."

"Pho, pho, there's no such hurry; I don't know what I have done with her bill."

"I'll run and get another."

"O upon no account! She may send another in two or three days. She deserves to wait a twelvemonth for her impertinence in troubling you at all about it."

"That was entirely accidental: but indeed you must give me leave to perform my promise and plead for her. It must be almost the same to you whether you pay such a trifle

a trifle as 20 *l.* now, or a month hence; and to this poor woman, the difference seems little short of life or death; for she tells me her husband is dying, and her children half famished, and though she looks an object of the cruellest want and distress herself, she appears to be their only support."

"O," cried Mr. Harrel, laughing, "what a dismal tale has she been telling you! no doubt she saw you were fresh from the country! But if you give credit to all the farragos of these trumpery impostors, you will never have a moment to yourself, nor a guinea in your purse."

"This woman," answered Cecilia, "cannot be an impostor, she carries marks but too evident and too dreadful in her countenance of the sufferings which she relates."

"O," returned he, "when you know the town better, you will soon see through tricks of this sort; a sick husband and five small children are complaints so stale now, that they serve no other purpose in the world but to make a joke."

"Those, however, who can laugh at them, must have notions of merriment very different to mine. And this poor woman, whose cause I have ventured to undertake, had she no family at all, must still and indisputably be an object of pity herself, for she is so weak she can hardly crawl, and so pallid, that she seems already half dead."

"All

"All imposition, depend upon it! The moment she is out of your sight, her complaints will vanish."

"Nay, sir," cried Cecilia, a little impatiently, "there is no reason to suspect such deceit, since she does not come hither as a beggar, however well the state of beggary may accord with her poverty: she only solicits the payment of a bill; and if in that there is any fraud, nothing can be so easy as detection."

Mr. Harrel bit his lips at this speech, and for some instants looked much disturbed; but soon recovering himself, he negligently said, "Pray how did she get at you?"

"I met her at the street door. But tell me, is not her bill a just one?"

"I cannot say; I have never had time to look at it."

"But you know who the woman is, and that her husband worked for you, and therefore that in all probability it is right,—do you not?"

"Yes, yes, I know who the woman is well enough; she has taken care of that, for she has pestered me every day these nine months."

Cecilia was struck dumb by this speech: hitherto she had supposed that the dissipation of his life kept him ignorant of his own injustice; but when she found he was so well informed of it, yet, with such total indifference,

ence, could suffer a poor woman to claim a just debt every day for nine months together, she was shocked and astonished beyond measure. They were both some time silent, and then Mr. Harrel, yawning and stretching out his arms, indolently asked, "Pray, why does not the man come himself?"

"Did I not tell you," answered Cecilia, staring at so absent a question, "that he was very ill, and unable even to work?"

"Well, when he is better," added he, moving towards the door, "he may call, and I will talk to him."

Cecilia, all amazement at this unfeeling behaviour, turned involuntarily to Mr. Arnott, with a countenance that appealed for his assistance; but Mr. Arnott hung his head, ashamed to meet her eyes, and abruptly left the room.

Mean time Mr. Harrel, half turning back, though without looking Cecilia in the face, carelessly said, "Well, won't you come?"

"No, Sir," answered she coldly.

He then returned to the library, leaving her equally displeased, surprised, and disconcerted at the conversation which had just passed between them. "Good Heaven," cried she to herself, "what strange, what cruel insensibility! to suffer a wretched family to starve, from an obstinate determination to assert that they can live! to distress the poor by retaining the recompence for which alone

they labour, and which at last they must have, merely from indolence, forgetfulness, or insolence! O how little did my uncle know, how little did I imagine to what a guardian I was entrusted!" She now felt ashamed even to return to the poor woman, though she resolved to do all in her power to soften her disappointment, and relieve her distress.

But before she had quitted the room, one of the servants came to tell her that his master begged the honour of her company up stairs. "Perhaps he relents!" thought she; and pleased with the hope, readily obeyed the summons.

She found him, his lady, Sir Robert Floyer, and two other gentlemen, all earnestly engaged in an argument over a large table, which was covered with plans and elevations of small buildings.

Mr. Harrel immediately addressed her with an air of vivacity, and said, "You are very good for coming; we can settle nothing without your advice; pray look at these different plans for our theatre, and tell us which is the best."

Cecilia advanced not a step: the sight of plans for new edifices when the workmen were yet unpaid for old ones, the cruel wantonness of raising fresh fabrics of expensive luxury, while those so lately built had brought their neglected labourers to ruin, excited

excited an indignation she scarce thought right to repress: while the easy sprightliness of the director of these revels, to whom but the moment before she had represented the oppression of which they made him guilty, filled her with aversion and disgust: and, recollecting the charge given her by the stranger at the Opera rehearsal, she resolved to speed her departure to another house, internally repeating, "Yes, I *will* save myself from *the impending destruction of unfeeling prosperity!*"

Mrs. Harrel, surprised at her silence and extreme gravity, enquired if she was not well, and why she had put off her visit to Miss Larolles? And Sir Robert Floyer, turning suddenly to look at her, said, "Do you begin to feel the London air already?"

Cecilia endeavoured to recover her serenity, and answer these questions in her usual manner; but she persisted in declining to give any opinion at all about the plans, and, after slightly looking at them, left the room.

Mr. Harrel, who knew better how to account for her behaviour than he thought proper to declare, saw with concern that she was more seriously displeased than he had believed an occurrence, which he had regarded as wholly unimportant, could have made her: and therefore desirous that she should be appeased, he followed her out of the library, and said, "Miss Beverley, will

to-morrow be soon enough for your *Protegée?*"

"O yes, no doubt!" answered she, most agreeably surprised by the question.

"Well, then, will you take the trouble to bid her come to me in the morning?"

Delighted at this unexpected commission, she thanked him with smiles for the office; and as she hastened down stairs to chear the poor expectant with the welcome intelligence, she framed a thousand excuses for the part he had hitherto acted, and without any difficulty, persuaded herself he began to see the faults of his conduct, and to meditate a reformation.

She was received by the poor creature she so warmly wished to serve with a countenance already so much enlivened, that she fancied Mr. Harrel had himself anticipated her intended information: this, however, she found was not the case, for as soon as she heard his message, she shook her head and said, "Ah, madam, his honour always says to-morrow! but I can better bear to be disappointed now, so I'll grumble no more; for indeed, madam, I have been blest enough to-day to comfort me for every thing in the world, if I could but keep from thinking of poor Billy! I could bear all the rest, madam, but whenever my other troubles go off, that comes back to me so much the harder!"

"There, indeed, I can afford you no relief,"

lief," said Cecilia, "but you must try to think less of him, and more of your husband and children who are now alive. To-morrow you will receive your money, and that, I hope, will raise your spirits. And pray let your husband have a physician, to tell you how to nurse and manage him; I will give you one fee for him now, and if he should want further advice, don't fear to let me know."

Cecilia had again taken out her purse, but Mrs. Hill, clasping her hands, called out, "Oh, madam, no! I don't come here to fleece such goodness! but blessed be the hour that brought me here to-day, and if my poor Billy was alive, he should help me to thank ou!"

She then told her that she was now quite rich, for while she was gone a gentleman had come into the room, who had given her five guineas.

Cecilia, by her description, soon found this gentleman was Mr. Arnott, and a charity so sympathetic with her own, failed not to raise him greatly in her favour. But as her benevolence was a stranger to that parade which is only liberal from emulation, when she found more money not immediately wanted, she put up her purse, and charging Mrs. Hill to enquire for her the next morning when she came to be paid, bid her hasten back to her sick husband.

And then, again ordering the carriage to the door, she set off upon her visit to Miss Larolles, with a heart happy in the good already done, and happier still in the hope of doing more.

Miss Larolles was out, and she returned home; for she was too sanguine in her expectations from Mr. Harrel, to have any desire of seeking her other guardians. The rest of the day she was more than usually civil to him, with a view to mark her approbation of his good intentions; while Mr. Arnott, gratified by meeting the smiles he so much valued, thought his five guineas amply repaid, independently of the real pleasure which he took in doing good.

CHAPTER X.

A PROVOCATION.

THE next morning, when breakfast was over, Cecilia waited with much impatience to hear some tidings of the poor carpenter's wife; but, though Mr. Harrel, who had always that meal in his own room, came into his lady's at his usual hour, to see what was going

going forward, he did not mention her name. She therefore went into the hall herself, to enquire among the servants if Mrs. Hill was yet come?

Yes, they answered, and had seen their master, and was gone.

She then returned to the breakfast room, where her eagerness to procure some information detained her, though the entrance of Sir Robert Floyer made her wish to retire. But she was wholly at a loss whether to impute to general forgetfulness, or to the failure of performing his promise, the silence of Mr. Harrel upon the subject of her petition.

In a few minutes they were visited by Mr. Morrice, who said he called to acquaint the ladies, that the next morning there was to be a rehearsal of a very grand new dance at the Opera-house, where, though admission was difficult, if it was agreeable to them to go, he would undertake to introduce them.

Mrs. Harrel happened to be engaged, and therefore declined the offer. He then turned to Cecilia, and said, "Well, ma'am, when did you see our friend Monckton?"

"Not since the rehearsal, Sir."

"He is a mighty agreeable fellow," he continued, "and his house in the country is charming. One is as easy at it as at home. Were you ever there, Sir Robert?"

"Not I, truly," replied Sir Robert;

"what should I go for?—to see an old woman with never a tooth in her head sitting at the top of the table! Faith I'd go an hundred miles a-day for a month never to see such a sight again."

"O but you don't know how well she does the honours," said Morrice; "and for my part, except just at meal times, I always contrive to keep out of her way."

"I wonder when she intends to die," said Mr. Harrel.

"She's been a long time about it," cried Sir Robert; "but those tough old cats last for ever. We all thought she was going when Monckton married her; however, if he had not managed like a driveller, he might have broke her heart nine years ago."

"I am sure I wish he had," cried Mrs. Harrel, "for she's an odious creature, and used always to make me afraid of her."

"But an old woman," answered Sir Robert, "is a person who has no sense of decency; if once she takes to living, the devil himself can't get rid of her."

"I dare say," cried Morrice, "she'll pop off before long in one of those fits of the asthma. I assure you sometimes you may hear her wheeze a mile off."

"She'll go never the sooner for that," said Sir Robert, "for I have got an old aunt of my own, who has been puffing and blowing as if she was at her last gasp ever since

since I can remember; and for all that, only yesterday, when I asked her doctor when she'd give up the ghost, he told me she might live these dozen years."

Cecilia was by no means sorry to have this brutal conversation interrupted by the entrance of a servant with a letter for her. She was immediately retiring to read it; but upon the petition of Mr. Monckton, who just then came into the room, she only went to a window. The letter was as follows:

To
Miss, -
at his Honour Squire Harrel's,
These.

Honoured Madam,

THIS with my humble duty. His Honour has given me nothing. But I would not be troublesome, having wherewithal to wait, so conclude,

Honoured Madam,
Your dutiful servant to command,
till death,
M. HILL.

The vexation with which Cecilia read this letter was visible to the whole company; and while Mr. Arnott looked at her with a wish of enquiry he did not dare express, and

Mr. Monckton, under an appearance of inattention, concealed the most anxious curiosity; Mr. Morrice alone had courage to interrogate her, and, pertly advancing, said, "He is a happy man who writ that letter, ma'am; for I am sure you have not read it with indifference."

"Were I the writer," said Mr. Arnott tenderly, "I am sure I should reckon myself far otherwise, for Miss Beverley seems to have read it with uneasiness."

"However I have read it," answered she, "I assure you it is not from *any man*."

"O pray, Miss Beverley," cried Sir Robert, coming forward, "are you any better to-day?"

"No, Sir, for I have not been ill."

"A little vapoured, I thought yesterday; perhaps you want exercise."

"I wish the ladies would put themselves under my care," cried Morrice, "and take a turn round the park."

"I don't doubt you, Sir," said Mr. Monckton, contemptuously, "and, but for the check of modesty, probably there is not a man here who would not wish the same."

"I could propose a much better scheme than that," said Sir Robert; "what if you all walk to Harley-street, and give me your notions of a house I am about there? what say you, Mrs. Harrel?"

"O, I should like it vastly."

"Done,"

"Done," cried Mr. Harrel; "'tis an excellent motion."

"Come then," said Sir Robert, "let's be off. Miss Beverley, I hope you have a good warm cloak?"

"I must beg you to excuse my attending you, Sir."

Mr. Monckton, who had heard this proposal with the utmost dread of its success, revived at the calm steadiness with which it was declined. Mr. and Mrs. Harrel both teized Cecilia to consent; but the haughty Baronet, evidently more offended than hurt by her refusal, pressed the matter no further, either with her or the rest of the party, and the scheme was dropt entirely.

Mr. Monckton failed not to remark this circumstance, which confirmed his suspicions, that though the proposal seemed made by chance, his design was nothing else than to obtain Cecilia's opinion concerning his house. But while this somewhat alarmed him, the unabated insolence of his carriage, and the confident defiance of his pride, still more surprized him; and notwithstanding all he observed of Cecilia, seemed to promise nothing but dislike, he could draw no other inference from his behaviour, than that if he admired, he also concluded himself sure of her.

This was not a pleasant conjecture, however little weight he allowed to it; and he

resolved, by outstaying all the company, to have a few minutes private discourse with her upon the subject.

In about half an hour, Sir Robert and Mr. Harrel went out together: Mr. Monckton still persevered in keeping his ground, and tried, though already weary, to keep up a general conversation; but what moved at once his wonder and his indignation was the assurance of Morrice, who seemed not only bent upon staying as long as himself, but determined, by rattling away, to make his own entertainment.

At length a servant came in to tell Mrs. Harrel that a stranger, who was waiting in the house-keeper's room, begged to speak with her upon very particular business.

"O, I know," cried she, "'tis that odious John Groot: do pray, brother, try to get rid of him for me, for he comes to teize me about his bill, and I never know what to say to him."

Mr. Arnott went immediately, and Mr. Monckton could scarce refrain from going too, that he might entreat John Groot by no means to be satisfied without seeing Mrs. Harrel herself: John Groot, however, wanted not his entreaties, as the servant soon returned to summon his lady to the conference.

But though Mr. Monckton now seemed near the completion of his purpose, Morrice still remained; his vexation at this circumstance

cumstance soon grew intolerable; to see himself upon the point of receiving the recompence of his perseverance, by the fortunate removal of all the obstacles in its way, and then to have it held from him by a young fellow he so much despised, and who had no entrance into the house but through his own boldness, and no inducement to stay in it but from his own impertinence, mortified him so insufferably, that it was with difficulty he even forbore affronting him. Nor would he have scrupled a moment desiring him to leave the room, had he not prudently determined to guard with the utmost sedulity against raising any suspicions of his passion for Cecilia.

He arose, however, and was moving towards her, with intention to occupy a part of a sofa on which she was seated, when Morrice, who was standing at the back of it, with a sudden spring which made the whole room shake, jumpt over, and sunk plump into the vacant place himself, calling out at the same time, "Come, come, what have you married men to do with young ladies? I shall seize this post for myself."

The rage of Mr. Monckton at this feat, and still more at the words *married men*, almost exceeded endurance; he stopt short, and looking at him with a fierceness that overpowered his discretion, was bursting out with "Sir, you are an——*impudent fellow*;"

but

but checking himself when he got half way, concluded with, "a very facetious gentleman!"

Morrice, who wished nothing so little as disobliging Mr. Monckton, and whose behaviour was merely the result of levity, and a want of early education, no sooner perceived his displeasure, than rising with yet more agility than he had seated himself, he resumed the obsequiousness of which an uncommon flow of spirits had robbed him, and guessing no other subject for his anger than the disturbance he had made, he bowed almost to the ground, first to him, and afterwards to Cecilia, most respectfully begging pardon of them both for his frolic, and protesting he had no notion he should have made such a noise.

Mrs. Harrel and Mr. Arnott now hastening back, enquired what had been the matter. Morrice, ashamed of his exploit, and frightened by the looks of Mr. Monckton, made an apology with the utmost humility, and hurried away: and Mr. Monckton, hopeless of any better fortune, soon did the same, gnawn with a cruel discontent which he did not dare avow, and longing to revenge himself upon Morrice, even by personal chastisement.

CHAPTER XI.

A NARRATION.

THE moment Cecilia was at liberty, she sent her own servant to examine into the real situation of the carpenter and his family, and to desire his wife would call upon her as soon as she was at leisure. The account which he brought back encreased her concern for the injuries of these poor people, and determined her not to rest satisfied till she saw them redressed. He informed her that they lived in a small lodging up two pair of stairs; that there were five children, all girls, the three eldest of whom were hard at work with their mother in matting chair-bottoms, and the fourth, though a mere child, was nursing the youngest; while the poor carpenter himself was confined to his bed, in consequence of a fall from a ladder while working at Violet-Bank, by which he was covered with wounds and contusions, and an object of misery and pain.

As soon as Mrs. Hill came, Cecilia sent for her into her own room, where she received her with the most compassionate tenderness, and desired to know when Mr. Harrel talked of paying her.

"To-

"To-morrow, madam," she answered, shaking her head, "that is always his honour's speech; but I shall bear it while I can. However, though I dare not tell his honour, something bad will come of it, if I am not paid soon."

"Do you mean, then, to apply to the law?"

"I must not tell you, madam; but to be sure we have thought of it many a sad time and often; but still, while we could rub on, we thought it best not to make enemies: but, indeed, madam, his honour was so hard-hearted this morning, that if I was not afraid you would be angry, I could not tell how to bear it; for when I told him I had no help now, for I had lost my Billy, he had the heart to say, so much the better, there's one the less of you."

"But what," cried Cecilia, extremely shocked by this unfeeling speech, "is the reason he gives for disappointing you so often?"

"He says, madam, that none of the other workmen are paid yet; and that, to be sure, is very true; but then they can all better afford to wait than we can, for we were the poorest of all, madam, and have been misfortunate from the beginning: and his honour would never have employed us, only he had run up such a bill with Mr. Wright, that he would not undertake any thing more till he was

paid. We were told from the first we should not get our money: but we were willing to hope for the best, for we had nothing to do, and were hard run, and had never had the offer of so good a job before; and we had a great family to keep, and many losses, and so much illness!——Oh madam! if you did but know what the poor go through!"

This speech opened to Cecilia a new view of life; that a young man could appear so gay and happy, yet be guilty of such injustice and inhumanity; that he could take pride in works which not even money has made his own, and live with undiminished splendor, when his credit itself began to fail, seemed to her incongruities so irrational, that hitherto she had supposed them impossible.

She then enquired if her husband had yet had any physician?

"Yes, madam, I humbly thank your goodness," she answered; "but I am not the poorer for that, for the gentleman was so kind he would take nothing."

"And does he give you any hopes? what does he say?"

"He says he must die, madam! but I knew that before."

"Poor woman! and what will you do then?"

"The same, madam, as I did when I lost my Billy, work on the harder!"

"Good Heaven, how severe a lot! but tell me,

me, why is it you seem to love your Billy so much better than the rest of your children!"

"Because, madam, he was the only boy that ever I had; he was seventeen years old, madam, and as tall and as pretty a lad! and so good, that he never cost me a wet eye till I lost him. He worked with his father, and all the folks used to say he was the better workman of the two."

"And what was the occasion of his death?"

"A consumption, madam, that wasted him quite to nothing: and he was ill a long time, and cost us a deal of money, for we spared neither for wine nor any thing, that we thought would but comfort him; and we loved him so we never grudged it. But he died, madam! and if it had not been for very hard work, the loss of him would quite have broke my heart."

"Try, however, to think less of him," said Cecilia; "and depend upon my speaking again for you to Mr. Harrel. You shall certainly have your money; take care, therefore, of your own health, and go home, and give comfort to your sick husband."

"Oh madam," cried the poor woman, tears streaming down her cheeks, "you don't know how touching it is to hear gentlefolks talk so kindly! And I have been used to nothing but roughness from his honour! But what I most fear, madam, is that when my husband is gone, he will be harder

to

to deal with than ever; for a widow, madam, is always hard to be righted; and I don't expect to hold out long myself, for sickness and sorrow wear fast: and then, when we are both gone, who is to help our poor children?"

"*I* will!" cried the generous Cecilia; "I am able, and I am willing; you shall not find all the rich hard-hearted, and I will try to make you some amends for the unkindness you have suffered."

The poor woman, overcome by a promise so unexpected, burst into a passionate fit of tears, and sobbed out her thanks with a violence of emotion that frightened Cecilia almost as much as it melted her. She endeavoured, by reiterated assurances of assistance, to appease her, and solemnly pledged her own honour, that she should certainly be paid the following Saturday, which was only three days distant.

Mrs. Hill, when a little calmer, dried her eyes, and humbly begging her to forgive a transport which she could not restrain, most gratefully thanked her for the engagement into which she had entered, protesting that she would not be *troublesome to her goodness* as long as she could help it: "And I believe," she continued, "that if his honour will but pay me time enough for the burial, I can make shift with what I have till then. But when my poor Billy died, we were sadly off indeed,

indeed, for we could not bear but bury him prettily, because it was the last we could do for him: but we could hardly scrape up enough for it, and yet we all went without our dinners to help forward, except the little one of all. But that did not much matter, for we had no great heart for eating."

"I cannot bear this!" cried Cecilia: "you must tell me no more of your Billy; but go home and chear your spirits, and do every thing in your power to save your husband."

"I will, madam," answered the woman, "and his dying prayers shall bless you, and all my children shall bless you, and every night they shall pray for you. And oh that Billy was but alive to pray for you too!"

Cecilia kindly endeavoured to soothe her, but the poor creature, no longer able to suppress the violence of her awakened sorrows, cried out, "I must go, madam, and pray for you at home, for now I have once begun crying again, I don't know how to have done!" and hurried away.

Cecilia determined to make once more an effort with Mr. Harrel for the payment of the bill, and if that, in two days, did not succeed, to take up money for the discharge of it herself, and rest all her security for reimbursement upon the shame with which such a proceeding must overwhelm him. Offended, however, by the repulse she had already

already received from him, and disgusted by all she had heard of his unfeeling negligence, she knew not how to address him, and resolved upon applying again to Mr. Arnott, who was already acquainted with the affair, for advice and assistance.

Mr. Arnott, though extremely gratified that she consulted him, betrayed by his looks an hopelessness of success that damped all her expectations. He promised, however, to speak to Mr. Harrel upon the subject, but the promise was evidently given to oblige the fair mediatrix, without any hope of advantage to the cause.

The next morning Mrs. Hill again came, and again without payment was dismissed.

Mr. Arnott then, at the request of Cecilia, followed Mr. Harrel into his room, to enquire into the reason of this breach of promise; they continued some time together, and when he returned to Cecilia, he told her, that his brother had assured him he would give orders to Davison, his gentleman, to let her have the money the next day.

The pleasure with which she would have heard this intelligence, was much checked by the grave and cold manner in which it was communicated: she waited, therefore, with more impatience than confidence for the result of this fresh assurance.

The next morning, however, was the same

as

as the last; Mrs. Hill came, saw Davison, and was sent away.

Cecilia, to whom she related her grievances, then flew to Mr. Arnott, and entreated him to enquire at least of Davison why the woman had again been disappointed.

Mr. Arnott obeyed her, and brought for answer, that Davison had received no orders from his master.

"I entreat you then," cried she, with mingled eagerness and vexation, "to go, for the last time, to Mr. Harrel. I am sorry to impose upon you an office so disagreeable, but I am sure you compassionate these poor people, and will serve them now with your interest, as you have already done with your purse. I only wish to know if there has been any mistake, or if these delays are merely to sicken me of petitioning."

Mr. Arnott, with a repugnance to the request which he could as ill conceal as his admiration of the zealous requester, again forced himself to follow Mr. Harrel. His stay was not long, and Cecilia at his return perceived that he was hurt and disconcerted. As soon as they were alone together, she begged to know what had passed? "Nothing," answered he, "that will give you any pleasure. When I entreated my brother to come to the point, he said it was his intention to pay all his workmen together, for that if

he paid any one singly, all the rest would be dissatisfied."

"And why," said Cecilia, "should he not pay them at once? There can be no more comparison in the value of the money to him and to them, than, to speak with truth, there is in his and in their right to it."

"But, madam, the bills for the new house itself are none of them settled, and he says that the moment he is known to discharge an account for the Temple, he shall not have any rest for the clamours it will raise among the workmen who were employed about the house."

"How infinitely strange!" exclaimed Cecilia; "will he not, then, pay any body?"

"Next quarter, he says, he shall pay them all, but, at present, he has a particular call for his money."

Cecilia would not truſt herself to make any comments upon such an avowal, but, thanking Mr. Arnott for the trouble which he had taken, she determined, without any further application, to desire Mr. Harrel to advance her 20l. the next morning, and satisfy the carpenter herself, be the risk what it might.

The following day, therefore, which was the Saturday when payment was promised, she begged an audience of Mr. Harrel; which he immediately granted; but, before she could make her demand, he said to her, with

with an air of the utmost gaiety and good-humour, "Well, Miss Beverley, how fares it with your *Protegée?* I hope, at length, she is contented. But I must beg you would charge her to keep her own counsel, as otherwise she will draw me into a scrape I shall not thank her for."

"Have you then paid her?" cried Cecilia, with much amazement.

"Yes; I promised you I would, you know."

This intelligence equally delighted and astonished her; she repeatedly thanked him for his attention to her petition, and, eager to communicate her success to Mr. Arnott, she hastened to find him. "Now," cried she, "I shall torment you no more with painful commissions; the Hills, at last, are paid!"

"From you, madam," answered he gravely, "no commissions could be painful."

"Well but," said Cecilia, somewhat disappointed, "you don't seem glad of this?"

"Yes," answered he, with a forced smile, "I am very glad to see you so."

"But how was it brought about? did Mr. Harrel relent? or did you attack him again?"

The hesitation of his answer convinced her there was some mystery in the transaction; she began to apprehend she had been deceived,

ceived, and hastily quitting the room, sent for Mrs. Hill: but the moment the poor woman appeared, she was satisfied of the contrary, for, almost frantic with joy and gratitude, she immediately flung herself upon her knees, to thank her benefactress for having *seen her righted.*

Cecilia then gave her some general advice, promised to continue her friend, and offered her assistance in getting her husband into an hospital: but she told her he had already been in one many months, where he was pronounced incurable, and was therefore desirous to spend his last days in his own lodgings.

"Well," said Cecilia, "make them as easy to him as you can, and come to me next week, and I will try to put you in a better way of living."

She then, still greatly perplexed about Mr. Arnott, sought him again, and, after various questions and conjectures, at length brought him to confess he had himself lent his brother the sum with which the Hills had been paid.

Struck with his generosity, she poured forth thanks and praises so grateful to his ears, that she soon gave him a recompence, which he would have thought cheaply purchased by half his fortune.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

A MAN OF WEALTH.

THE meanness with which Mr. Harrel had assumed the credit, as well as accepted the assistance of Mr. Arnott, encreased the disgust he had already excited in Cecilia, and hastened her resolution of quitting his house: and therefore, without waiting any longer for the advice of Mr. Monckton, she resolved to go instantly to her other guardians, and see what better prospects their habitations might offer.

For this purpose, she borrowed one of the carriages, and gave orders to be driven into the city, to the house of Mr. Briggs.

She told her name, and was shewn, by a little shabby foot-boy, into a parlour.

Here she waited, with tolerable patience, for half an hour, but then, imagining the boy had forgotten to tell his master she was in the house, she thought it expedient to make some inquiry.

No bell, however, could she find, and therefore she went into the passage in search of the

the foot-boy; but as she was proceeding to the head of the kitchen stairs, she was startled by hearing a man's voice from the upper part of the house, exclaiming, in a furious passion, "Dare say you have filched it for a dish-clout!"

She called out, however, "Are any of Mr. Brigg's servants below?"

"Anan!" answered the boy, who came to the foot of the stairs with a knife in one hand, and an old shoe, upon the sole of which he was sharpening it, in the other, "Does any one call?"

"Yes," said Cecilia, "I do; for I could not find the bell."

"O, we have no bell in the parlour," returned the boy, "master always knocks with his stick."

"I am afraid Mr. Briggs is too busy to see me, and if so, I will come another time."

"No, ma'am," said the boy, "master's only looking over his things from the wash."

"Will you tell him, then, that I am waiting?"

"I has, ma'am; but master misses his shaving-rag, and he says he won't come to the Mogul till he has found it." And then he went on with sharpening his knife.

This little circumstance was at least sufficient to satisfy Cecilia, that if she fixed her abode with Mr. Briggs, she should not have

much uneasiness to fear from the sight of extravagance and profusion.

She returned to the parlour, and after waiting another half hour, Mr. Briggs made his appearance.

Mr. Briggs was a short, thick, sturdy man, with very small keen black eyes, a square face, a dark complexion, and a snub nose. His constant dress, both in winter and summer, was a snuff colour suit of clothes, blue and white speckled worsted stockings, a plain shirt, and a bob wig. He was seldom without a stick in his hand, which he usually held to his forehead when not speaking.

This bob wig, however, to the no small amazement of Cecilia, he now brought into the room upon the fore-finger of his left hand, while, with his right, he was smoothing the curls; and his head, in defiance of the coldness of the weather, was bald and uncovered.

"Well," cried he, as he entered, "did you think should not come?"

"I was very willing, Sir, to wait your leisure."

"Ay, ay, knew you had not much to do. Been looking for my shaving-rag. Going out of town; never use such a thing at home, paper does as well. Warrant master Harrel never heard of such a thing; ever see him comb his own wig? Warrant he don't know how!

how! never trust mine out of my hands, the boy would tear off half the hair; all one to master Harrel, I suppose. Well, which is the warmer man, that's all? Will he cast an account with me?"

Cecilia, at a loss what to say to this singular exordium, began an apology for not waiting upon him sooner.

"Ay, ay," cried he, "always gadding, no getting sight of you. Live a fine life! A pretty guardian, master Harrel! and where's t'other? where's old Don Puffabout?"

"If you mean Mr. Delvile, sir, I have not yet seen him."

"Thought so. No matter: as well not. Only tell you he's a German Duke, or a Spanish Don Ferdinand. Well you've me! poorly off else. A couple of ignoramussus! don't know when to buy nor when to sell. No doing business with either of them. We met once or twice; all to no purpose; only heard Don Vampus count his old Grandees; how will that get interest for money? Then comes master Harrel,——twenty bows to a word,—looks at a watch,—about as big as a sixpence,—poor raw ninny!—a couple of rare guardians! Well you've me, I say; mind that!"

Cecilia was wholly unable to devise any answer to these effusions of contempt and anger; and therefore his harangue lasted without interruption, till he had exhausted

all his subjects of complaint, and emptied his mind of ill-will; and then, settling his wig, he drew a chair near her, and twinkling his little black eyes in her face, his rage subsided into the most perfect good-humour; and after peering at her some time with a look of much approbation, he said, with an arch nod, "Well, my duck, got ever a sweet-heart yet?"

Cecilia laughed, and said, "No."

"Ah, little rogue, don't believe you! all a fib! better speak out: come, fit I should know; a'n't you my own ward? to be sure almost of age, but not quite, so what's that to me?"

She then, more seriously, assured him she had no intelligence of that sort to communicate.

"Well, when you have, tell, that's all. Warrant sparks enough hankering. I'll give you some advice. Take care of sharpers; don't trust shoe-buckles, nothing but Bristol stones! tricks in all things. A fine gentleman sharp as another man. Never give your heart to a gold-topped cane, nothing but brass gilt over. Cheats every where: fleece you in a year; won't leave you a groat. But one way to be safe,——bring 'em all to me."

Cecilia thanked him for his caution, and promised not to forget his advice.

"That's the way," he continued, "bring 'em to me. Won't be bamboozled. Know

their tricks. Shew 'em the odds on't. Ask for the rent-roll,—see how they'll look! stare like stuck pigs? got no such thing."

"Certainly, sir, that will be an excellent method of trial."

"Ay, ay, know the way! soon find if they are above par. Be sure don't mind gold waistcoats: nothing but tinsel, all shew and no substance; better leave the matter to me; take care of your myself; know where to find one will do."

She again thanked him; and, being fully satisfied with this specimen of his conversation, and unambitious of any further counsel from him, she arose to depart.

"Well," repeated he, nodding at her with a look of much kindness, "leave it to me, I say; I'll get you a careful husband, so take no thought about the matter."

Cecilia, half laughing, begged he would not give himself much trouble, and assured him she was not in any haste.

"All the better," said he, "good girl; no fear for you: look out myself; warrant I'll find one. Not very easy neither: hard times! men scarce! wars and tumults! stocks low! women chargeable!——but don't fear; do our best; get you off soon."

She then returned to her carriage; full of reflection upon the scene in which she had just been engaged, and upon the strangeness of hastening from one house to avoid a

vice the very want of which seemed to render another insupportable! but she now found that though luxury was more baneful in its consequences, it was less disgustful in its progress than avarice; yet, insuperably averse to both, and almost equally desirous to fly from the unjust extravagance of Mr. Harrel, as from the comfortless and unnecessary parsimony of Mr. Briggs, she proceeded instantly to St. James's-square, convinced that her third guardian, unless exactly resembling one of the others, must inevitably be preferable to both.

CHAPTER II.

A MAN OF FAMILY.

THE house of Mr. Delvile was grand and spacious, fitted up not with modern taste, but with the magnificence of former times; the servants were all veterans, gorgeous in their liveries, and profoundly respectful in their manners: every thing had an air of state, but of a state so gloomy, that while it inspired awe, it repressed pleasure.

Cecilia sent in her name, and was admitted without

without difficulty, and was then ushered with great pomp through sundry apartments, and rows of servants, before she came into the presence of Mr. Delvile.

He received her with an air of haughty affability, which, to a spirit open and liberal as that of Cecilia, could not fail being extremely offensive; but too much occupied with the care of his own importance to penetrate into the feelings of another, he attributed the uneasiness which his reception occasioned to the over-awing predominance of superior rank and consequence.

He ordered a servant to bring her a chair, while he only half rose from his own upon her entering into the room; then, waving his hand and bowing, with a motion that desired her to be seated, he said, "I am very happy, Miss Beverley, that you have found me alone; you would rarely have had the same good fortune. At this time of day I am generally in a crowd. People of large connections have not much leisure in London, especially if they see a little after their own affairs, and if their estates, like mine, are dispersed in various parts of the kingdom. However, I am glad it happened so. And I am glad, too, that you have done me the favour of calling without waiting till I sent, which I really would have done as soon as I heard of your arrival, but that the

multiplicity of my engagements allowed me no respite."

A display of importance so ostentatious made Cecilia already half repent her visit, satisfied that the hope in which she had planned it would be fruitless.

Mr. Delvile, still imputing to embarrassment, an inquietude of countenance that proceeded merely from disappointment, imagined her veneration was every moment encreasing; and therefore, pitying a timidity which both gratified and softened him, and equally pleased with himself for inspiring, and with her for feeling it, he abated more and more of his greatness, till he became, at length, so infinitely condescending, with intention to give her courage, that he totally depressed her with mortification and chagrin.

After some general enquiries concerning her way of life, he told her that he hoped she was contented with her situation at the Harrels, adding, "If you have any thing to complain of, remember to whom you may appeal." He then asked if she had seen Mr. Briggs?

"Yes, sir, I am this moment come from his house."

"I am sorry for it; his house cannot be a proper one for the reception of a young lady. When the Dean made application that I would be one of your guardians, I instantly sent

sent him a refusal, as is my custom upon all such occasions, which indeed occur to me with a frequency extremely importunate: but the Dean was a man for whom I had really a regard, and therefore, when I found my refusal had affected him, I suffered myself to be prevailed upon to indulge him, contrary not only to my general rule, but to my inclination."

Here he stopt, as if to receive some compliment; but Cecilia, very little disposed to pay him any, went no farther than an inclination of the head.

"I knew not, however," he continued, "at the time I was induced to give my consent, with whom I was to be associated; nor could I have imagined the Dean so little conversant with the distinctions of the world, as to disgrace me with inferior coadjutors: but the moment I learnt the state of the affair, I insisted upon withdrawing both my name and countenance."

Here again he paused; not in expectation of an answer from Cecilia, but merely to give her time to marvel in what manner he had at last been melted.

"The Dean," he resumed, "was then very ill; my displeasure, I believe, hurt him. I was sorry for it; he was a worthy man, and had not meant to offend me; in the end, I accepted his apology, and was even persuaded to accept the office. You

have a right, therefore, to consider yourself as *personally* my ward: and though I do not think proper to mix much with your other guardians, I shall always be ready to serve and advise you, and much pleased to see you."

"You do me honour, sir," said Cecilia, extremely wearied of such graciousness, and rising to be gone.

"Pray sit still," said he, with a smile; "I have not many engagements for this morning. You must give me some account how you pass your time. Are you much out? The Harrels, I am told, live at a great expence. What is their establishment?"

"I don't exactly know, sir."

"They are a decent sort of people, I believe; are they not?"

"I hope so, sir!"

"And they have a tolerable acquaintance, I believe: I am told so; for I know nothing of them."

"They have, at least, a very numerous one, sir."

"Well, my dear," said he, taking her hand, "now you have once ventured to come, don't be apprehensive of repeating your visits: I must introduce you to Mrs. Delvile; I am sure she will be happy to shew you any kindness. Come, therefore, when you please, and without scruple. I would call upon

upon you myself, but am fearful of being embarrassed by the people with whom you live."

He then rang his bell, and with the same ceremonies which had attended her admittance, she was conducted back to her carriage.

And here died away all hope of putting into execution, during her minority, the plan of which the formation had given her so much pleasure. She found that her present situation, however wide of her wishes, was by no means the most disagreeable in which she could be placed; she was tired, indeed, of dissipation, and shocked at the sight of unfeeling extravagance; but notwithstanding the houses of each of her other guardians were exempt from these particular vices, she saw not any prospect of happiness with either of them; vulgarity seemed leagued with avarice to drive her from the mansion of Mr. Briggs, and haughtiness with ostentation to exclude her from that of Mr. Delvile.

She came back, therefore, to Portman-square, disappointed in her hopes, and sick both of those whom she quitted, and of those to whom she was returning; but in going to her own apartment, Mrs. Harrel, eagerly stopping her, begged she would come into the drawing-room, where she promised her a most agreeable surprise.

Cecilia,

Cecilia, for an instant, imagined that some old acquaintance was just arrived out of the country; but, upon her entrance, she saw only Mr. Harrel and some workmen, and found that the agreeable surprise was to proceed from the sight of an elegant Awning, prepared for one of the inner apartments, to be fixed over a long desert-table, which was to be ornamented with various devices of cut glass.

"Did you ever see any thing so beautiful in your life?" cried Mrs. Harrel; "and when the table is covered with the coloured ices, and those sort of things, it will be as beautiful again. We shall have it ready for Tuesday se'nnight."

"I understood you were engaged to go to the Masquerade?"

"So we shall; only we intend to see masks at home first."

"I have some thoughts," said Mr. Harrel, leading the way to another small room, "of running up a flight of steps, and a little light gallery here, and so making a little Orchestra. What would such a thing come to, Mr. Tomkins?"

"O, a trifle, sir," answered Mr. Tomkins, "a mere nothing."

"Well, then, give orders for it, and let it be done directly. I don't care how slight it is, but pray let it be very elegant. Won't it be a great addition, Miss Beverley?"

"Indeed,

"Indeed, sir, I don't think it seems to be very necessary," said Cecilia; who wished much to take that moment for reminding him of the debt he had contracted with Mr. Arnott.

"Lord, Miss Beverley is so grave!" cried Mrs. Harrel, "nothing of this sort gives her any pleasure."

"She has, indeed," answered Cecilia, trying to smile, "not much taste for the pleasure of being always surrounded by workmen."

And, as soon as she was able, she retired to her room, feeling, both on the part of Mr. Arnott and the Hills, a resentment at the injustice of Mr. Harrel, which fixed her in the resolution of breaking through that facility of compliance, which had hitherto confined her disapprobation to her own breast, and venturing, henceforward, to mark the opinion she entertained of his conduct, by consulting nothing but reason and principle in her own.

Her first effort towards this change was made immediately, in begging to be excused from accompanying Mrs. Harrel to a large card assembly that evening.

Mrs. Harrel, extremely surprised, asked a thousand times the reason of her refusal, imagining it to proceed from some very extraordinary cause; nor was she, without the utmost difficulty, persuaded at last that she merely

merely meant to pass one evening by herself.

But the next day, when the refusal was repeated, she was still more incredulous; it seemed to her impossible that any one who had the power to be encircled with company, could by choice spend a second afternoon alone; and she was so urgent in her request to be entrusted with the secret, that Cecilia found no way left to appease her, but by frankly confessing she was weary of eternal visiting, and sick of living always in a crowd.

"Suppose, then," cried she, "I send for Miss Larolles to come and sit with you?"

Cecilia, not without laughing, declined this proposal, assuring her that no such assistant was necessary for her entertainment: yet it was not till after a long contention that she was able to convince her there would be no cruelty in leaving her by herself.

The following day, however, her trouble diminished; for Mrs. Harrel, ceasing to be surprised, thought little more of the matter, and forbore any earnestness of solicitation; and from that time, she suffered her to follow her own humour with very little opposition. Cecilia was much concerned to find her so unmoved; and not less disappointed at the indifference of Mr. Harrel, who, being seldom of the same parties with his lady, and seeing her too rarely either to communicate or hear any domestic occurrences, far from being

being ſtruck, as she had hoped, with the new way in which she passed her time, was scarce sensible of the change, and interfered not upon the subject.

Sir Robert Floyer, who continued to see her when he dined in Portman-square, often enquired what she did with herself in an evening; but never obtaining any satisfactory answer, he concluded her engagements were with people to whom he was a stranger.

Poor Mr. Arnott felt the cruellest disappointment in being deprived of the happiness of attending her in her evening's expeditions, when, whether he conversed with her or not, he was sure of the indulgence of seeing and hearing her.

But the greatest sufferer from this new regulation was Mr. Monckton, who, unable any longer to endure the mortifications of which his morning visits to Portman-square had been productive, determined not to trust his temper with such provocations in future, but rather to take his chance of meeting with her elsewhere: for which purpose, he assiduously frequented all public places, and sought acquaintance with every family and every person he believed to be known to the Harrels: but his patience was unrewarded, and his diligence unsuccessful; he met with her no where, and, while he continued his search, fancied every evil power was at work

work to lead him whither he was sure never to find her.

Mean while Cecilia passed her time greatly to her own satisfaction. Her first care was to assist and comfort the Hills. She went herself to their lodgings, ordered and paid for whatever the physician prescribed to the sick man, gave clothes to the children, and money and various necessaries to the wife. She found that the poor carpenter was not likely to languish much longer, and therefore, for the present, only thought of alleviating his sufferings, by procuring him such indulgencies as were authorised by his physician, and enabling his family to abate so much of their labour as was requisite for obtaining time to nurse and attend him: but she meant, as soon as the last duties should be paid him, to assist his survivors in attempting to follow some better and more profitable business.

Her next solicitude was to furnish herself with a well-chosen collection of books; and this employment, which to a lover of literature, young and ardent in its pursuit, is perhaps the mind's first luxury, proved a source of entertainment so fertile and delightful, that it left her nothing to wish.

She confined not her acquisitions to the limits of her present power, but, as she was laying in a stock for future as well as immediate

diate advantage, she was restrained by no expence from gratifying her taste and her inclination. She had now entered the last year of her minority, and therefore had not any doubt that her guardians would permit her to take up whatever sum she should require for such a purpose.

And thus, in the exercise of charity, the search of knowledge, and the enjoyment of quiet, serenely in innocent philosophy passed the hours of Cecilia.

CHAPTER III.

A MASQUERADE.

THE first check this tranquillity received was upon the day of the masquerade, the preparations for which have been already mentioned. The whole house was then in commotion, from various arrangements and improvements which were planned for almost every apartment that was to be opened for the reception of masks. Cecilia herself, however little pleased with the attendant circumstance of wantonly accumulating unnecessary debts, was not the least animated

animated of the party; she was a stranger to every diversion of this sort, and from the novelty of the scene, hoped for uncommon satisfaction.

At noon Mrs. Harrel sent for her to consult upon a new scheme which occurred to Mr. Harrel, of fixing in fantastic forms some coloured lamps in the drawing room.

While they were all discoursing this matter over, one of the servants, who had two or three times whispered some message to Mr. Harrel, and then retired, said, in a voice not too low to be heard by Cecilia, "Indeed, sir, I can't get him away."

"He's an insolent scoundrel," answered Mr. Harrel; "however, if I must speak to him, I must:" and went out of the room.

Mrs. Harrel still continued to exercise her fancy upon this new project, calling both upon Mr. Arnott and Cecilia to admire her taste and contrivance; till they were all interrupted by the loudness of a voice from below stairs, which frequently repeated, "Sir, I can wait no longer! I have been put off till I can be put off no more!"

Startled by this, Mrs. Harrel ceased her employment, and they all stood still and silent. They then heard Mr. Harrel with much softness answer, "Good Mr. Rawlins, have a little patience; I shall receive a large

sum

sum of money to-morrow, or next day, and you may then depend upon being paid."

"Sir," cried the man, "you have so often told me the same, that it goes just for nothing: I have had a right to it along time, and I have a bill to make up that can't be waited for any longer."

"Certainly, Mr. Rawlins," replied Mr. Harrel, with still encreasing gentleness, "and certainly you shall have it: nobody means to dispute you right; I only beg you to wait a day or two days at furthest, and you may then depend upon being paid. And you shall not be the worse for obliging me; I will never employ any body else, and I shall have occasion for you very soon, as I intend to make some alterations at Violet-Bank that will be considerable."

"Sir," said the man, still louder, "it is of no use your employing me, if I can never get my money: All my workmen must be paid whether I am or no; and so if I must needs speak to a lawyer, why there's no help for it."

"Did you ever hear any thing so impertinent?" exclaimed Mrs. Harrel; "I am sure Mr. Harrel will be very much to blame, if ever he lets that man do any thing more for him."

Just then Mr. Harrel appeared, and, with an air of affected unconcern, said, "Here's the most insolent rascal of a mason below stairs

stairs I ever met with in my life; he has come upon me, quite unexpectedly, with a bill of 400*l.* and won't leave the house without the money. Brother Arnott, I wish you would do me the favour to speak to the fellow, for I could not bear to stay with him any longer."

"Do you wish me to give him a draught for the money upon my own banker?"

"That would be vastly obliging," answered Mr. Harrel, "and I will give you my note for it directly. And so we shall get rid of this fellow at once: and he shall do nothing more for me as long as he lives. I will run up a new building at Violet-Bank next summer, if only to ſhew him what a job he has lost."

"Pay the man at once, there's a good brother," cried Mrs. Harrel, "and let's hear no more of him."

The two gentlemen then retired to another room, and Mrs. Harrel, after praising the extreme good-nature of her brother, of whom she was very fond, and declaring that the mason's impertinence had quite frightened her, again returned to her plan of new decorations.

Cecilia, amazed at this indifference to the state of her husband's affairs, began to think it was her own duty to talk with her upon the subject: and therefore, after a silence so marked that Mrs. Harrel enquired into its

its reason, she said, "Will you pardon me, my dear friend, if I own I am rather surprised to see you continue these preparations?"

"Lord, why?"

"Because any fresh unnecessary expences just now, till Mr. Harrel actually receives the money he talks of——"

"Why, my dear, the expence of such a thing as this is nothing; in Mr. Harrel's affairs I assure you it will not be at all felt. Besides, he expects money so soon, that it is just the same as if he had it already."

Cecilia, unwilling to be too officious, began then to express her admiration of the goodness and generosity of Mr. Arnott; taking frequent occasion, in the course of her praise, to insinuate that those only can be properly liberal, who are just and œconomical.

She had prepared no masquerade habit for this evening, as Mrs. Harrel, by whose direction she was guided, informed her it was not necessary for ladies to be masked at home, and said she should receive her company herself in a dress which she might wear upon any other occasion. Mr. Harrel, also, and Mr. Arnott, made not any alteration in their appearance.

At about eight o'clock the business of the evening began; and before nine, there were so many masks that Cecilia wished she had herself made one of the number, as she was

far more conspicuous in being almost the only female in a common dress, than any masquerade habit could have made her. The novelty of the scene, however, joined to the general air of gaiety, diffused throughout the company, shortly lessened her embarrassment; and after being somewhat familiarized to the abruptness with which the masks approached her, and the freedom with which they looked at or addressed her, the first confusion of her situation subsided, and in her curiosity to watch others, she ceased to observe how much she was watched herself.

Her expectations of entertainment were not only fulfilled but surpassed; the variety of dresses, the medley of characters, the quick succession of figures, and the ludicrous mixture of groupes, kept her attention unwearied: while the conceited efforts at wit, the total thoughtlessness of consistency; and the ridiculous incongruity of the language with the appearance, were incitements to surprise and diversion without end. Even the local cant of, *Do you know me? Who are you?* and *I know you;* with the sly pointing of the finger, the arch nod of the head, and the pert squeak of the voice, though wearisome to those who frequent such assemblies, were, to her unhackneyed observation, additional subjects of amusement.

Soon after nine o'clock, every room was occupied, and the common crowd of regular

masqueraders were dispersed through the various apartments Dominos of no character, and fancy-dresses of no meaning, made, as is usual at such meetings, the general herd of the company; for the rest, the men were Spaniards, chimney-sweepers, Turks, watchmen, conjurers, and old women; and the ladies, shepherdesses, orange girls, Circassians, gipseys, haymakers and sultanas.

Cecilia had, as yet, escaped any address beyond the customary enquiry of *Do you know me?* and a few passing compliments; but when the rooms filled, and the general crowd gave general courage, she was attacked in a manner more pointed and singular.

The very first mask who approached her, seemed to have nothing less in view than preventing the approach of every other: yet had he little reason to hope favour for himself, as the person he represented, of all others least alluring to the view, was the devil! He was black from head to foot, save that two red horns seemed to issue from his forehead; his face was so completely covered, that the sight only of his eyes was visible, his feet were cloven, and in his right hand he held a wand the colour of fire.

Waving this wand as he advanced towards Cecilia, he cleared a semi-circular space before her chair, thrice with the most profound reverence bowed to her, thrice turned himself

self around with sundry grimaces, and then fiercely planted himself at her side.

Cecilia was amused by his mummery, but felt no great delight in his guardianship, and, after a short time, arose, with intention to walk to another place; but the black gentleman, adroitly moving round her, held out his hand to obstruct her passage, and therefore, preferring captivity to resistance, she was again obliged to seat herself.

An Hotspur, who just then made his appearance, was now strutting boldly towards her; but the devil, rushing furiously forwards, placed himself immediately between them. Hotspur, putting his arms a-kembo with an air of defiance, gave a loud stamp with his right foot, and then——marched into another room!

The victorious devil ostentatiously waved his wand, and returned to his station.

Mr. Arnott, who had never moved two yards from Cecilia, knowing her too well to suppose she received any pleasure from being thus distinguished, modestly advanced to offer his assistance in releasing her from confinement; but the devil, again describing a circle with his wand, gave him three such smart raps on the head, that his hair was disordered, and his face covered with powder. A general laugh succeeded; and Mr. Arnott, too diffident to brave raillery, or withstand shame, retired in confusion.

The

The black gentleman seemed now to have all authority in his own hands, and his wand was brandished with more ferocity than ever, no one again venturing to invade the domain he thought fit to appropriate for his own.

At length, however, a Don Quixote appeared, and every mask in the room was eager to point out to him the imprisonment of Cecilia.

This Don Quixote was accoutered with tolerable exactness, according to the description of the admirable Cervantes; his armour was rusty, his helmet was a barber's bason, his shield a pewter dish, and his lance an old sword, fastened to a slim cane. His figure, tall and thin, was well adapted to the character he represented; and his mask, which depictured a lean and haggard face, worn with care, yet fiery with crazy passions, exhibited, with propriety, the most striking, the knight of the doleful countenance.

The complaints against the devil, with which immediately and from all quarters he was assailed, he heard with the most solemn taciturnity: after which, making a motion for general silence, he stalked majestically towards Cecilia, but stopping short of the limits prescribed by her guard, he kissed his spear in token of allegiance, and then, slowly

dropping upon one knee, began the following addreſs:

"Most incomparable Princeſs!

THUS humbly proſtrate at the feet of your divine and ineffable beauty, graciously permit the most pitiful of your servitors, Don Quixote de la Mancha, from your high and tender grace, to salute the fair boards which sustain your corporeal machine."

Then, bending down his head, he kissed the floor; after which, raising himself upon his feet, he proceeded in his speech.

"Report, O most fair and unmatchable virgin! daringly affirmeth, that a certain discourteous person, who calleth himself the devil, even now, and in thwart of your fair inclinations, keepeth and detaineth your irradiant frame in hostile thraldom. Suffer then, magnanimous and undescribable lady! that I, the most groveling of your unworthy vassals, do sift the fair truth out of this foul sieve, and conjure your highness veritably to inform me, if that honourable chair, which haply supports your terrestrial perfections, containeth the inimitable burthen with the free and legal consent of your celestial spirit?"

Here he ceased: and Cecilia, who laughed at this characteristic address, though she had not courage to answer it, again made an effort

fort to quit her place, but again by the wand of her black persecutor was prevented.

This litle incident was answer sufficient for the valorous knight, who indignantly exclaimed,

"Sublime Lady!

I BESEECH but of your exquisite mercy to refrain mouldering the clay composition of my unworthy body to impalpable dust, by the refulgence of those bright stars vulgarly called eyes, till I have lawfully wreaked my vengeance upon this unobliging caitiff, for his most disloyal obstruction of your highness's adorable pleasure."

Then, bowing low, he turned from her, and thus addressed his intended antagonist:

"Uncourtly Miscreant,

THE black garment which envelopeth thy most unpleasant person, seemeth even of the most ravishing whiteness, in compare of the black bile which floateth within thy sable exterior. Behold, then, my gauntlet! yet ere I deign to be the instrument of thy extirpation, O thou most mean and ignoble enemy! that the honour of Don Quixote de la Mancha may not be sullied by thy extinction, I do here confer upon thee the honour of knighthood, dubbing thee by my own

sword, Don Devil, knight of the horrible physiognomy."

He then attempted to strike his shoulder with his spear, but the black gentleman, adroitly eluding the blow, defended himself with his wand: a mock fight ensued, conducted on both sides with admirable dexterity: but Cecilia, less eager to view it than to become again a free agent, made her escape into another apartment; while the rest of the ladies, though they almost all screamed, jumped upon chairs and sofas to peep at the combat.

In conclusion, the wand of the knight of the horrible physiognomy was broken against the shield of the knight of the doleful countenance: upon which Don Quixote called out *victoria!* The whole room echoed the sound: the unfortunate new knight retired abrubtly into another apartment; and the conquering Don seizing the fragments of the weapon of his vanquished enemy, went out in search of the lady for whose releasement he had fought: and the moment he found her, prostrating both himself and the trophies at her feet, he again pressed the floor with his lips; and then slowly arising, repeated his reverences with added formality, and, without waiting her acknowledgments, gravely retired.

The moment he departed, a Minerva, not stately

stately nor austere, not marching in warlike majesty, but gay and airy,

'Tripping on light fantastic toe,

ran up to Cecilia, and squeaked out, "Do you know me?"

"Not," answered she, instantly recollecting Miss Larolles, "by your *appearance*, I own; but by your *voice*, I think I can guess you."

"I was monstrous sorry," returned the goddess, without understanding this distinction, "that I was not at home when you called upon me. Pray how do you like my dress? I assure you I think it's the prettiest here. But do you know there's the most shocking thing in the world happened in the next room? I really believe there's a common chimney-sweeper got in! I assure you it's enough to frighten one to death, for every time he moves, the soot smells so you can't think; quite real soot, I assure you! only conceive how nasty! I declare I wish with all my heart it would suffocate him!"

Here she was interrupted by the re-appearance of *Don Devil*, who, looking around him, and perceiving that his antagonist was gone, again advanced to Cecilia: not, however, with the authority of his first approach, for with his wand he had lost much of his power; but to recompence himself for this disgrace, he had recourse to another method

equally effectual for keeping his prey to himself, for he began a growling, so dismal and disagreeable, that while many of the ladies, and, among the first, the *Goddess of Wisdom and Courage*, ran away to avoid him, the men all stood aloft, to watch what next was to follow.

Cecilia now became seriously uneasy; for she was made an object of general attention, yet could neither speak nor be spoken to. She could suggest no motive for behaviour so whimsical, though she imagined the only person who could have the assurance to practise it was sir Robert Floyer.

After some time spent thus disagreeably, a white domino, who for a few minutes had been a very attentive spectator, suddenly came forward, and exclaiming, "*I'll cross him though he blast me!*" rushed upon the fiend, and grasping one of his horns, called out to a Harlequin who stood near him, "Harlequin! do you fear to fight the devil?"

"Not I, truly," answered Harlequin, whose voice immediately betrayed young Morrice, and who, issuing from the crowd, whirled himself round before the black gentleman with yet more agility than he had himself done before Cecilia, giving him, from time to time, many smart blows on his shoulders, head and back, with his wooden sword.

The rage of *Don Devil* at this attack seemed

ed somewhat beyond what a masquerade character rendered necessary; he foamed at the mouth with resentment, and defended himself with so much vehemence, that he soon drove poor Harlequin into another room: but, when he would have returned to his prey, the genius of pantomime, curbed, but not subdued, at the instigation of the white domino returned to the charge, and by a perpetual rotation of attack and retreat, kept him in constant employment, pursuing him from room to room, and teazing him without cessation or mercy.

Mean time Cecilia, delighted at being released, hurried into a corner, where she hoped to breath and look on in quiet; and the white domino, having exhorted Harlequin to torment the tormentor, and keep him at bay, followed her with congratulations upon her recovered freedom.

"It is you," answered she, "I ought to thank for it, which indeed I do most heartily. I was so tired of confinement, that my mind seemed almost as little at liberty as my person."

"Your persecutor, I persume," said the domino, "is known to you."

"I hope so," answered she, "because there is one man I suspect, and I should be sorry to find there was another equally disagreeable."

"O, depend upon it," cried he, "there

are many who would be happy to confine you in the same manner; neither have you much cause for complaint; you have, doubtless, been the aggressor, and played this game yourself without mercy, for I read in your face the captivity of thousands: have you, then, any right to be offended at the spirit of retaliation which one, out of such numbers, has courage to exert in return?"

"I protest," cried Cecilia, "I took you for my defender! whence is it you have become my accuser?"

"From seeing the danger to which my incautious knight errantry has exposed me: I begin, indeed, to take you for a very mischievous sort of person; and I fear the poor devil from whom I rescued you, will be amply revenged for his disgrace, by finding that the first use you make of your freedom, is to doom your deliverer to bondage."

Here they were disturbed by the extreme loquacity of two opposite parties: and listening attentively, they heard from one side, "My angel! fairest of creatures! goddess of my heart!" uttered in accents of rapture; while from the other, the vociferation was so violent, they could distinctly hear nothing.

The white domino satisfied his curiosity by going to both parties; and then, returning to Cecilia, said, "Can you conjecture who was making those soft speeches? a Shylock! his knife all the time in his hand, and

his

his design, doubtless, to *cut as near the heart as possible!* while the loud cackling from the other side, is owing to the riotous merriment of a noisy Mentor! When next I hear a disturbance, I shall expect to see some simpering Pythagoras stunned by his talkative disciples."

"To own the truth," said Cecilia, "the almost universal neglect of the charcters assumed by these masquers, has been the chief source of my entertainment this evening: for at a place of this sort, the next best thing to a character well supported, is a character ridiculously burlesqued."

"You cannot, then, have wanted amusement," returned the domino; "for among all the persons assembled in these apartments, I have seen only three who have seemed conscious that any change but that of dress was necessary to disguise them."

"And pray who are those?"

"A Don Quixote, a school-master, and your friend the devil."

"O call him not my friend!" exclaimed Cecilia; "for indeed in or out of that garb he is particularly my aversion."

"*My* friend, then, I will call him," said the domino; "for so, were he ten devils, I must thank him, since I owe to him the honour of conversing with you. And, after all, to give him his due, to which, you know, he is even proverbially entitled, he has shewn

such abilities in the performance of his part, so much skill in the display of malice, and so much perseverance in the art of tormenting, that I cannot but respect his ingenuity and capacity. And, indeed, if instead of an evil genius, he had represented a guardian angel, he could not have shown a more refined taste in his choice of an object to hover about."

Just then they were approached by a young hay-maker, to whom the white domind called out, "You look as gay and as brisk as if fresh from the hay-field, after only half a day's work. Pray how is it you pretty lasses find employment for the winter?"

"How?" cried she, pertly; "why the same as for the summer!" And pleased with her own readiness at repartee, without feeling the ignorance it betrayed, she tript lightly on.

Immediately after, the school-master, mentioned by the white domino, advanced to Cecilia. His dress was merely a long wrapping gown of green stuff, a pair of red slippers, and a woollen night-cap of the same colour; while, as the symbol of his profession, he held a rod in his hand.

"Ah, fair lady," he cried, "how soothing were it to the austerity of my life, how softening to the rigidity of my manners, might I—without a *breaking out of bounds* which I ought to be the first to discourage, and a "confusion to all order" for which

the school-boy should himself chastise his master, be permitted to cast at your feet this emblem of my authority! and to forget, in the softness of your conversation, all the roughness of discipline!"

"No, no," cried Cecilia, "I will not be answerable for such corruption of taste!"

"This repulse," answered he, "is just what I feared; for alas! under what pretence could a poor miserable pedagogue presume to approach you? Should I examine you in the dead languages, would not your living accents charm from me all power of reproof? Could I look at you, and hear a false concord? Should I doom you to water-gruel as a dunce, would not my subsequent remorse make me want it myself as a madman? Were your fair hand spread out to me for correction, should I help applying my lips to it, instead of my rat-tan? If I ordered you to be *called up*, should I ever remember to have you sent back? And if I commanded you to stand in a corner, how should I forbear following you thither myself?"

Cecilia, who had no difficulty in knowing this pretended school-master for Mr. Gosport, was readily beginning to propose conditions, for according him her favour, when their ears were assailed by a forced phthisical cough, which they found proceeded from an apparent old woman, who was a young man in disguise, and whose hobbling gait, grunting voice,

voice, and moſt grievous aſthmatic complaints, ſeemed greatly enjoyed and applauded by the company.

"How true is it, yet how inconſiſtent," cried the white domino, "that while we all deſire to live long, we have all an horror of being old! The figure now paſſing is not meant to ridicule any particular perſon, nor to ſtigmatize any particular abſurdity; its ſole view is to expoſe to contempt and deriſion the general and natural infirmities of age! and the deſign is not more diſguſting than impolitic; for why, while ſo carefully we guard from all approaches of death, ſhould we cloſe the only avenues to happineſs in long life, reſpect, and tenderneſs."

Cecilia, delighted both by the underſtanding and humanity of her new acquaintance, and pleaſed at being joined by Mr. Goſport, was beginning to be perfectly ſatisfied with her ſituation, when, creeping ſoftly towards her, ſhe again perceived the black gentleman.

"Ah!" cried ſhe, with ſome vexation, "here comes my old tormentor! Screen me from him if poſſible, or he will again make me his priſoner."

"Fear not," cried the white domino; "he is an evil ſpirit, and we will ſurely lay him. If one ſpell fails, we muſt try another."

Cecilia then perceiving Mr. Arnott, begged he would alſo aſſiſt in barricading her from

from the fiend who so obstinately pursued her.

Mr. Arnott most gratefully acceded to the proposal; and the white domino, who acted as commanding officer, assigned to each his station: he desired Cecilia would keep quietly to her seat, appointed the school-master to be her guard on the left, took possession himself of the opposite posts, and ordered Mr. Arnott to stand centinel in front.

This arrangement being settled, the guards of the right and left wings instantly secured their places; but while Mr. Arnott was considering whether it were better to face the besieged, or the enemy, the arch foe rushed suddenly before him, and laid himself down at the feet of Cecilia.

Mr. Arnott, extremely disconcerted, began a serious expostulation upon the ill-breeding of this behaviour; but the devil, resting all excuse upon supporting his character, only answered by growling.

The white domino seemed to hesitate for a moment in what manner to conduct himself, and with a quickness that marked his chagrin, said to Cecilia, "You told me you knew him—has he any right to follow you?"

"If he thinks he has," answered she, a little alarmed by his question, "this is no time to dispute it."

And then, to avoid any hazard of altercation,

tion, she discreetly forbore making further complaints, preferring any persecution to seriously remonstrating with a man of so much insolence as the Baronet.

The school-master, laughing at the whole transaction, only said, "And pray, madam, after playing the devil with all mankind, what right have you to complain that one man plays the devil with you?"

"We shall, at least, fortify you," said the white domino, "from any other assailant: no three-headed Cerberus could protect you more effectually: but you will not, therefore, fancy yourself in the lower regions; for, if I mistake not, the torment of *three guardians* is nothing new to you."

"And how," said Cecilia, surprised, "should you know of my three guardians? I hope I am not quite encompassed with evil spirits!"

"No," answered he; "you will find me as inoffensive as the hue of the domino I wear;——and would I could add as insensible!"

"This black gentleman," said the school-master, "who, and very innocently, I was going to call your *black guard*, has as noble and fiend-like a disposition as I remember to have seen; for without even attempting to take any diversion himself, he seems gratified to his heart's content, in excluding from it the lady he serves."

"He

"He does me an honour I could well dispense with," said Cecilia; "but I hope he has some secret satisfaction in his situation, which pays him for its apparent inconvenience."

Here the black gentleman half raised himself, and attempted to take her hand; she started, and with much displeasure drew it back; he then growled, and again sunk prostrate.

"This is a fiend," said the school-master, "who to himself sayeth *Budge not!* let his conscience never so often say *Budge!* Well, fair lady, your fortifications, however, may now be deemed impregnable, since I, with a flourish of my rod, can keep off the young by recollection of the past, and since the fiend, with a jut of his foot, may keep off the old from dread of the future!"

Here a Turk, richly habited and resplendent with jewels, stalked towards Cecilia, and, having regarded her some time, called out, "I have been looking hard about me the whole evening, and, faith, I have seen nothing handsome before!"

The moment he opened his mouth, his voice, to her utter astonishment, betrayed Sir Robert Floyer! "Mercy on me," cried she aloud, and pointing to the fiend, "who, then, can this possible be?"

"Do you not know?" cried the white domino.

"I thought

"I thought I had known with certainty," answered she; "but I now find I was mistaken."

"He is a happy man," said the schoolmaster, sarcastically looking at the Turk, "who has removed your suspicions only by appearing in another character!"

"Why what the deuce, then," exclaimed the Turk, "have you taken that black dog there for *me*?"

Before this question could be answered, an offensive smell of soot making every body look around the room, the chimney-sweeper already mentioned by Miss Larolles was perceived to enter it. Every way he moved, a passage was cleared for him, as the company, with general disgust, retreated wherever he advanced. He was short, and seemed somewhat incommoded by his dress; he held his soot bag over one arm, and his shovel under the other. As soon as he espied Cecilia, whose situation was such as to prevent her eluding him, he hooted aloud, and came stumping up to her. "Ah, ha," he cried, "found at last;" then, throwing down his shovel, he opened the mouth of his bag, and pointing waggishly to her head, said, "Come, shall I pop you?—A good place for naughty girls; in, I say, poke in!——cram you up the chimney."

And then he put forth his sooty hands to reach her cap.

Cecilia,

Cecilia, though she instantly knew the dialect of her guardian, Mr. Briggs, was not therefore the more willing to be so handled, and started back to save herself from his touch; the white domino also came forward, and spread out his arms as a defence to her, while the devil, who was still before her, again began to growl.

"Ah, ha!" cried the chimney-sweeper, laughing, "so did not know me? Poor duck! won't hurt you; don't be frightened; nothing but old guardian; all a joke!" And then, patting her cheek with his dirty hand, and nodding at her with much kindness, "Pretty dove," he added, "be of good heart! sha'n't be meddled with; come to see after you. Heard of your tricks; thought I'd catch you!—come o'purpose.—Poor duck! did not know me! ha! ha!—good joke enough!"

"What do you mean, you dirty dog," cried the Turk, "by touching that lady?"

"Won't tell!" answered he; "not your business. Got a good right. Who cares for pearls? Nothing but French beads;" pointing with a sneer to his turban. Then, again addressing Cecilia; "Fine doings!" he continued. "Here's a place! never saw the like before! turn a man's noddle! All goings out; no comings in; wax candles in every room; servants thick as mushrooms! And where's the cash? Who's to pay the piper?

piper? Come to more than a guinea; warrant Master Harrel thinks that nothing!"

"A guinea!" contemptuously repeated the Turk; "and what do you suppose a guinea will do?"

"What? Why keep a whole family handsome a week:—never spend so much myself; no, nor half neither."

"Why then how the devil do you live? Do you beg?"

"Beg! Who should beg of? You?—Got any thing to give? Are warm?"

"Take the trouble to speak more respectfully, sir!" said the Turk, haughtily; "I see you are some low fellow, and I shall not put up with your impudence."

"Shall, shall! I say!" answered the chimney-sweeper, sturdily. "Hark'ee, my duck," chucking Cecilia under the chin; "don't be cajoled, nick that spark! Never mind gold trappings; none of his own; all a take-in; hired for eighteen pence! not worth a groat. Never set your heart on a fine outside, nothing within. Bristol stones won't buy stock: only wants to chouse you."

"What do you mean by that, you little old scrub?" cried the imperious Turk; "would you provoke me to soil my fingers by pulling that beastly snub nose?" For Mr. Briggs had saved himself any actual mask, by merely blacking his face with soot.

"Beastly

"Beastly snub nose!" sputtered out the chimney-sweeper, in much wrath; "good nose enough; do'nt want a better; good as another man's. Where's the harm on't?"

"How could this black-guard get in?" cried the Turk; "I believe he's a mere common chimney-sweeper out of the streets, for he's all over dirt and filth. I never saw such a dress at a masquerade before in my life."

"All the better," returned the other; "Would not change. What do think it cost?"

"Cost? Why not a crown."

"A crown? Ha! ha!—a pot o'beer! Little Tom borrowed it; had it of our own sweep; said 'twas for himself. I bid him a pint; rascal would not take less."

"Did your late uncle," said the white domino, in a low voice to Cecilia, "chuse for two of your guardians, Mr. Harrel and Mr. Briggs, to give you an early lesson upon the opposite errors of profusion and meanness?"

"My uncle?" cried Cecilia, starting; "were you acquainted with my uncle?"

"No," said he; "for my happiness I knew him not."

"You would have owed no loss of happiness to an acquaintance with him," said Cecilia, very seriously; "for he was one who dispensed to his friends nothing but good."

"Per-

"Perhaps so," said the domino; "but I fear I should have found the good he dispensed through his niece not quite unmixed with evil!"

"What's here?" cried the chimney-sweeper, stumbling over the fiend; "what's this black thing? Don't like it; looks like the devil. You sha'n't stay with it; carry you away; take care of you myself."

He then offered Cecilia his hand; but the black gentleman, raising himself upon his knees before her, paid her, in dumb shew, the humblest devoirs, yet prevented her from removing.

"Ah! ha!" cried the chimney-sweeper, significantly nodding his head; "smell a rat! a sweet-heart in disguise. No bamboozling! it won't do; a'n't so soon put upon. If you've got any thing to say, tell *me*, that's the way. Where's the cash? Got ever a *rentall?* Are warm? That's the point. Are warm!"

The fiend, without returning any answer, continued his homage to Cecilia, at which the enraged chimney-sweeper exclaimed, "Come, come with me! won't be imposed upon; an old fox,—understand trap."

He then again held out his hand, but Cecilia, pointing to the fiend, answered, "How can I come, sir?"

"Shew you the way," cried he; "shovel him

him off." And taking his shovel, he very roughly set about removing him.

The fiend then began a yell so horrible, that it disturbed the whole company: but the chimney-sweeper, only saying, "Aye, aye, blacky, growl away, blacky — makes no odds,—" sturdily continued his work; and, as the fiend had no chance of resisting so coarse an antagonist without a serious struggle, he was presently compelled to change his ground.

"Warm work!" cried the victorious chimney-sweeper, taking off his wig, and wiping his head with the sleeves of his dress; "pure warm work this!"

Cecilia, once again freed from her persecutor, instantly quitted her place, almost equally desirous to escape the haughty Turk, who was peculiarly her aversion, and the facetious chimney-sweeper, whose vicinity, either on account of his dress or his conversation, was by no means desirable. She was not, however, displeased that the white domino and the school-master still continued to attend her.

"Pray look," said the white domino, as they entered another apartment, at that figure of Hope; is there any in the room half so full of despondency?"

"The reason, however," answered the school-master, "is obvious; that light and beautiful silver anchor upon which she reclines,

clines, presents an occasion irresistible for an attitude of elegant dejection; and the assumed character is always given up, where an opportunity offers to display any beauty, or manifest any perfection in the dear proper person!"

"But why," said Cecilia, "should she assume the character of *Hope?* Could she not have been equally dejected, and equally elegant as Niobe, or some tragedy queen?"

"But she does not assume the character," answered the school-master; "she does not even think of it: the dress is her object, and that alone fills up all her ideas. Enquire of almost any body in the room concerning the persons they seem to represent, and you will find their ignorance more gross than you can imagine; they have not once thought upon the subject; accident, or convenience, or caprice has alone directed their choice."

A tall and elegant youth now approached them, whose laurels and harp announced Apollo. The white domino immediately enquired of him if the noise and turbulence of the company had any chance of being stilled into silence and rapture, by the divine music of the inspired god?

"No," answered he, pointing to the room in which was erected the new gallery, and whence, as he spoke, issued the sound of an *hautboy;* "there is a flute playing there already."

"O for

"O for a Midas," cried the white domino, "to return to this leather-eared god the disgrace he received from him!"

They now proceeded to the apartment which had been lately fitted up for refreshments, and which was so full of company, that they entered it with difficulty. And here they were again joined by Minerva, who, taking Cecilia's hand, said, "Lord, how glad I am you've got away from that frightful black mask! I can't conceive who he is; nobody can find out; it's monstrous odd, but he has not spoke a word all night, and he makes such a shocking noise when people touch him, that I assure you it's enough to put one in a fright."

"And pray," cried the school-master, disguising his voice, "how camest thou to take the helmet of Minerva for a fool's cap?"

"Lord, I have not," cried she innocently; "why the whole dress is Minerva's; don't you see?"

"My dear child," answered he, "thou couldest as well with that little figure pass for a Goliah, as with that little wit for a Pallas."

Their attention was now drawn from the goddess of wisdom to a mad Edgar, who so vehemently ran about the room calling out, "Poor Tom's a cold!" that, in a short time, he was obliged to take off his mask,

from an effect, not very delicate, of the heat!

Soon after, a gentleman, desiring some lemonade, whose toga spoke the consular dignity, through his broken English betrayed a native of France, the school-master followed him, and, with reverence the most profound, began to address him in Latin; but, turning quick towards him, he gaily said, "*Monsieur j'ai l'honneur de representer Ciceron, le grand Ciceron, pere de sa patrie! mais quoique j'ai cet honneur là, je ne suis pas pedant!——mon dieu, Monsieur, je ne parle que le François dans la bonne campagnie!*" And, politely bowing, he went on.

Just then Cecilia, while looking about the room for Mrs. Harrel, felt herself suddenly pinched by the cheek, and hastily turning round, perceived again her friend the chimney-sweeper, who, laughing, cried "Only me! don't be frightened. Have something to tell you;—had no luck!—got never a husband yet! can't find one! looked all over, too; sharp as a needle. Not one to be had! all catched up!"

"I am glad to hear it, sir," said Cecilia, somewhat vexed by observing the white domino attentively listening; "and I hope, therefore, you will give yourself no further trouble."

"Pretty duck!" cried he, chucking her under

under the chin; "never mind, don't be cast down; get one at last. Leave it to me. Nothing under a plum; won't take up with less. Good by, ducky, good by! must go home now—begin to be nodding."

And then, repeating his kind caresses, he walked away.

"Do you think, then," said the white domino, "more highly of Mr. Briggs for discernment and taste than of any body?"

"I hope not!" answered she, "for low indeed should I then think of the rest of the world!"

"The commission with which he is charged," returned the domino, "has then misled me; I imagined discernment and taste might be necessary ingredients for making such a choice as your approbation would sanctify; but perhaps his skill in guarding against any fraud or deduction in the stipulation he mentioned, may be all that is requisite for the execution of his trust."

"I understand very well," said Cecilia, a little hurt, "the severity of your meaning; and if Mr. Briggs had any commission but of his own suggestion, it would fill me with shame and confusion; but as that is not the case, those, at least, are sensations which it cannot give me."

"My meaning," cried the domino, with some earnestness, "should I express it seriously, would but prove to you the respect

and admiration with which you have inspired me; and if indeed, as Mr. Briggs hinted, such a prize is to be purchased by riches, I know not, from what I have seen of its merit, any sum I should think adequate to its value."

"You are determined, I see," said Cecilia, smiling, "to make most liberal amends for your asperity."

A loud clack of tongues now interrupted their discourse; and the domino, at the desire of Cecilia, for whom he had procured a seat, went forward to enquire what was the matter. But scarce had he given up his place a moment, before, to her great mortification, it was occupied by the fiend.

Again, but with the same determined silence he had hitherto preserved, he made signs of obedience and homage, and her perplexity to conjecture who he could be, or what were his motives for this persecution, became the more urgent, as they seemed the less likely to be satisfied. But the fiend, who was no other than Mr. Monckton, had every instant less encouragement to make himself known: his plan had in nothing succeeded, and his provocation at its failure had caused him the bitterest disappointment; he had intended, in the character of a tormentor, not only to pursue and hover around her himself, but he had also hoped, in the same character, to have kept at a distance all

other admirers: but the violence with which he had over-acted his part, by raising her disgust and the indignation of the company, rendered his views wholly abortive: while the consciousness of an extravagance for which, if discovered, he could assign no reason not liable to excite suspicions of his secret motives, reduced him to guarding a painful and most irksome silence the whole evening. And Cecilia, to whose unsuspicious mind the idea of Mr. Monckton had never occurred, added continually to the cruelty of his situation, by an undisguised aversion to his assiduity, as well as by a manifest preference to the attendance of the white domino. All, therefore, that his disappointed scheme now left in his power, was to watch her motions, listen to her discourse, and inflict occasionally upon others some part of the chagrin with which he was tormented himself.

While they were in this situation, Harlequin, in consequence of being ridiculed by the Turk for want of agility, offered to jump over the new desert table, and desired to have a little space cleared to give room for his motions. It was in vain the people who distributed the refreshments, and who were placed at the other side of the table, expostulated upon the danger of the experiment; Morrice had a rage of enterprize un-

tameable, and therefore, first taking a run, he attempted the leap.

The consequence was such as might naturally be expected; he could not accomplish his purpose, but, finding himself falling, imprudently caught hold of the lately erected Awning, and pulled it entirely upon his own head, and with it the new contrived lights, which in various forms were fixed to it, and which all came down together.

The mischief and confusion occasioned by this exploit were very alarming, and almost dangerous; those who were near the table suffered most by the crush, but splinters of the glass flew yet further; and as the room, which was small, had been only lighted up by lamps hanging from the Awning, it was now in total darkness, except close to the door, which was still illuminated from the adjoining apartments.

The clamour of Harlequin, who was covered with glass, papier machée, lamps, and oil, the screams of the ladies, the universal buz of tongues, and the struggle between the frighted crowd which was enclosed to get out, and the curious crowd from the other apartments to get in, occasioned a disturbance and tumult equally noisy and confused. But the most serious sufferer was the unfortunate fiend, who being nearer the table than

than Cecilia, was so pressed upon by the numbers which poured from it, that he found a separation unavoidable; and was unable, from the darkness and the throng, to discover whether she was still in the same place, or had made her escape into another.

She had, however, encountered the white domino, and, under his protection, was safely conveyed to a further part of the room. Her intention and desire were to quit it immediately, but at the remonstrance of her conductor, she consented to remain some time longer. "The conflict at the door," said he, "will quite overpower you. Stay here but a few minutes, and both parties will have struggled themselves tired, and you may then go without difficulty. Mean time, can you not, by this faint light, suppose me one of your guardians, Mr. Briggs, for example, or, if he is too old for me, Mr. Harrel, and entrust yourself to my care?"

"You seem wonderfully well acquainted with my guardians," said Cecilia; "I cannot imagine how you have had your intelligence."

"Nor can I," answered the domino, "imagine how Mr. Briggs became so particularly your favourite as to be entrusted with powers to dispose of you."

"You are mistaken indeed; he is entrusted with no powers but such as his own fancy has suggested."

"But how has Mr. Delvile offended you, that with him only you seem to have no commerce or communication?"

"Mr. Delvile!" repeated Cecilia, still more surprised, "are you also acquainted with Mr. Delvile?"

"He is certainly a man of fashion," continued the domino, "and he is also a man of honour; surely, then, he would be more pleasant for confidence and consultation, than one whose only notion of happiness is money, whose only idea of excellence is avarice, and whose only conception of sense is distrust!"

Here a violent outcry again interrupted their conversation; but not till Cecilia had satisfied her doubts concerning the white domino, by conjecturing he was Mr. Belfield, who might easily at the house of Mr. Monckton, have gathered the little circumstances of her situation to which he alluded, and whose size and figure exactly resembled those of her new acquaintance.

The author of the former disturbance was now the occasion of the present: the fiend, having vainly traversed the room in search of Cecilia, stumbled accidentally upon Harlequin, before he was freed from the relicks of his own mischief; and unable to resist the temptation of opportunity, and the impulse of revenge, he gave vent to the wrath so often excited by the blunders, forwardness, and tricks of Morrice, and inflicted upon him, with

with his own wooden sword, which he seized for that purpose, a chastisement the most serious and severe.

Poor Harlequin, unable to imagine any reason for this violent attack, and already cut with the glass, and bruised with the fall, spared not his lungs in making known his disapprobation of such treatment: but the fiend, regardless either of his complaints or his resistance, forbore not to belabour him till compelled by the entrance of people with lights. And then, after artfully playing sundry antics under pretence of still supporting his character, with a motion too sudden for prevention, and too rapid for pursuit, he escaped out of the room, and hurrying down stairs, threw himself into an hackney chair, which conveyed him to a place where he privately changed his dress before he returned home: bitterly repenting the experiment he had made, and conscious too late that had he appeared in a character he might have avowed, he could, without impropriety, have attended Cecilia the whole evening. But such is deservedly the frequent fate of cunning, which while it plots surprise and detection of others, commonly overshoots its mark, and ends in its own disgrace.

The introduction of the lights now making manifest the confusion which the frolic of Harlequin had occasioned, he was seized with such a dread of the resentment of Mr.

Harrel, that, forgetting blows, bruises, and wounds, not one of which were so frightful to him as reproof, he made the last exhibition of his agility by an abrupt and hasty retreat.

He had, however, no reason for apprehension, since in every thing that regarded expence, Mr. Harrel had no feeling, and his Lady had no thought.

The rooms now began to empty very fast, but among the few masks yet remaining, Cecilia again perceived Don Quixote; and while, in conjunction with the white domino, she was allowing him the praise of having supported his character with more uniform propriety than any other person in the assembly, she observed him taking off his mask for the convenience of drinking some lemonade, and, looking in his face, found he was no other than Mr. Belfield! Much astonished, and more than ever perplexed, she again turned to the white domino, who seeing in her countenance a surprise of which he knew not the reason, said, half laughing, "You think, perhaps, I shall never be gone? And indeed I am almost of the same opinion: but what can I do? Instead of growing weary by the length of my stay, my reluctance to shorten it encreases with its duration; and all the methods I take, whether by speaking to you or looking at you, with a view to be satiated, only double my eagerness for look-

ing and listening again! I must go however; and if I am happy, I may perhaps meet with you again,——though, if I am wise, I shall never seek you more!"

And then, with the last stragglers that reluctantly disappeared, he made his exit; leaving Cecilia greatly pleased with his conversation and his manners, but extremely perplexed to account for his knowledge of her affairs and situation.

The school-master had already been gone some time.

She was now earnestly pressed by the Harrels and Sir Robert, who still remained, to send to a warehouse for a dress, and accompany them to the Pantheon; but though she was not without some inclination to comply, in the hope of further prolonging the entertainment of an evening from which she had received much pleasure, she disliked the attendance of the Baronet, and felt averse to grant any request that he could make, and therefore she begged they would excuse her; and having waited to see their dresses, which were very superb, she retired to her own apartment.

A great variety of conjecture upon all that had passed, now, and till the moment that she sunk to rest, occupied her mind; the extraordinary persecution of the fiend excited at once her curiosity and amazement, while the

knowledge of her affairs shewn by the white domino, surprized her not less, and interested her more.

CHAPTER IV.

AN AFFRAY.

THE next morning during breakfast, Cecilia was informed that a gentleman desired to speak with her. She begged permission of Mrs. Harrel to have him asked up stairs; and was not a little surprized when he proved to be the same old gentleman whose singular exclamations had so much struck her at Mr. Monckton's, and at the rehearsal of Artaserse.

Abruptly and with a stern aspect advancing to her, "You are rich," he cried; "are you therefore worthless?"

"I hope not!" answered she, in some consternation; while Mrs. Harrel, believing his intention was to rob them, ran precipitately to the bell, which she rang without ceasing till two or three servants hastened into the room: by which time, being less alarmed,

alarmed, she only made signs to them to stay, and stood quietly herself to wait what would follow.

The old man, without attending to her, continued his dialogue with Cecilia.

"Know you then," he said, "a blameless use of riches? such a use as not only in the broad glare of day shall shine resplendent, but in the darkness of midnight, and stilness of repose, shall give you reflections unimbittered, and slumbers unbroken? tell me, know you this use?"

"Not so well, perhaps," answered she, "as I ought; but I am very willing to learn better."

"Begin, then, while yet youth and inexperience, new to the callousness of power and affluence, leave something good to work upon; yesterday you saw the extravagance of luxury and folly; to-day look deeper, and see and learn to pity, the misery of disease and penury."

He then put into her hand a paper, which contained a most affecting account of the misery to which a poor and wretched family had been reduced, by sickness, and various other misfortunes.

Cecilia, "open as day to melting charity," having hastily perused it, took out her purse, and, offering to him three guineas, said, "You must direct me, Sir, what to give, if this is insufficient."

"Hast

"Hast thou so much heart?" cried he, with emotion, "and has fortune, though it has cursed thee with the temptation of prosperity, not yet rooted from thy mind its native benevolence? I return in part thy liberal contribution; this," taking one guinea, "doubles my expectations;" I will not, by making thy charity distress thee, accelerate the fatal hour of hardness and degeneracy."

He was then going; but Cecilia, following him, said, "No, take it all! Who should assist the poor if I will not? Rich, without connections; powerful, without wants; upon whom have they any claim if not upon me?"

"True," cried he, receiving the rest, "and wise as true. Give, therefore, whilst yet thou hast the heart to give, and make, in thy days of innocence and kindness, some interest with Heaven and the poor!"

And then he disappeared.

"Why, my dear," cried Mrs. Harrel, "what could induce you to give the man so much money? Don't you see he is crazy? I dare say he would have been just as well contented with sixpence."

"I know not what he is," said Cecilia, "but his manners are not more singular than his sentiments are affecting: and if he is actuated by charity to raise subscriptions for the indigent, he can surely apply to no one who ought so readily to contribute as myself."

Mr.

Mr. Harrel then came in, and his lady most eagerly told him the transaction.

"Scandalous!" he exclaimed; "why this is no better than being a house-breaker! Pray give orders never to admit him again. Three guineas! I never heard so impudent a thing in my life! Indeed, Miss Beverley, you must be more discreet in future, you will else be ruined before you know where you are."

"Thus it is," said Cecilia, half smiling, "that we can all lecture one another! to-day you recommend œconomy to me; yesterday I with difficulty forbore recommending it to you."

"Nay," answered he, "that was quite another matter; expence incurred in the common way of a man's living is quite another thing to an extortion of this sort."

"It is another thing, indeed," said she, "but I know not that it is therefore a better."

Mr. Harrel made no answer: and Cecilia, privately moralizing upon the different estimates of expence and œconomy made by the dissipated and the charitable, soon retired to her own apartment, determined firmly to adhere to her lately adopted plan, and hoping, by the assistance of her new and very singular monitor, to extend her practice of doing good, by enlarging her knowledge of distress.

Objects are, however, never wanting for the exercise of benevolence; report soon published

lished her liberality, and those who wished to believe it, failed not to enquire into its truth. She was soon at the head of a little band of pensioners, and, never satisfied with the generosity of her donations, found in a very short time, that the common allowance of her guardians was scarce adequate to the calls of her munificence.

And thus, in acts of goodness and charity, passed undisturbed another week of the life of Cecilia: but when the fervour of self-approbation lost its novelty, the pleasure with which her new plan was begun first subsided into tranquillity, and then sunk into languor. To a heart formed for friendship and affection the charms of solitude are very short-lived; and though she had sickened of the turbulence of perpetual company, she now wearied of passing all her time by herself, and sighed for the comfort of society, and the relief of communication. But she saw with astonishment the difficulty with which this was to be obtained: the endless succession of diversions, the continual rotation of assemblies, the numerousness of splendid engagements, of which while every one complained, every one was proud to boast, so effectually impeded private meetings and friendly intercourse, that, whichever way she turned herself, all commerce seemed impracticable, but such as either led to dissipation, or accidentally flowed from it.

Yet

Yet finding the error into which her ardour of reformation had hurried her, and that a rigid seclusion from company was productive of a lassitude as little favourable to active virtue as dissipation itself, she resolved to soften her plan, and by mingling amusement with benevolence, to try, at least, to approach that golden mean, which, like the philosopher's stone, always eludes our grasp, yet always invites our wishes.

For this purpose she desired to attend Mrs. Harrel to the next Opera that should be represented.

The following Saturday, therefore, she accompanied that lady and Mrs. Mears to the Haymarket, escorted by Mr. Arnott.

They were very late; the Opera was begun, and even in the lobby the crowd was so great that their passage was obstructed. Here they were presently accosted by Miss Larolles, who, running up to Cecilia and taking her hand, said, "Lord, you can't conceive how glad I am to see you! why, my dear creature, where have you hid yourself these twenty ages? You are quite in luck in coming to-night, I assure you; it's the best Opera we have had this season: there's such a monstrous crowd there's no stirring. We sha'n't get in this half hour. The coffee-room is quite full; only come and see; is it not delightful?"

This intimation was sufficient for Mrs. Harrel,

Harrel, whose love of the Opera was merely a love of company, fashion, and shew; and therefore to the coffee-room she readily led the way.

And here Cecilia found rather the appearance of a brilliant assembly of ladies and gentlemen, collected merely to see and to entertain one another, than of distinct and casual parties, mixing solely from necessity, and waiting only for room to enter a theatre.

The first person that addressed them was Captain Aresby, who, with his usual delicate languishment, smiled upon Cecilia, and softly whispering, "How divinely you look to-night!" proceeded to pay his compliments to some other ladies.

"Do pray now," cried Miss Larolles, "observe Mr. Meadows! only just see where he has fixed himself! in the very best place in the room, and keeping the fire from every body! I do assure you that's always his way, and it's monstrous provoking, for if one's ever so cold, he lollops so, that one's quite starved! But you must know there's another thing he does that is quite as bad, for if he gets a seat, he never offers to move, if he sees one sinking with fatigue. And besides, if one is waiting for one's carriage two hours together, he makes it a rule never to stir a step to see for it. Only think how monstrous!"

"These are heavy complaints, indeed," said

said Cecilia, looking at him attentively; "I should have expected from his appearance a very different account of his gallantry, for he seems dressed with more studied elegance than any body here."

"O yes," cried Miss Larolles, "he is the sweetest dresser in the world: he has the most delightful taste you can conceive, nobody has half so good a fancy. I assure you it's a great thing to be spoke to by him: we are all of us quite angry when he won't take any notice of us."

"Is your anger," said Cecilia, laughing, "in honour of himself or of his coat?"

"Why, Lord, don't you know all this time that he is an *ennuyé*?"

"I know, at least," answered Cecilia, "that he would soon make one of me."

"O but one is never affronted with an *ennuyé*, if he is ever so provoking, because one always knows what it means."

"Is he agreeable?"

"Why, to tell you the truth,—but pray now don't mention it,—I think him most excessive disagreeable! He yawns in one's face every time one looks at him. I assure you sometimes I expect to see him fall fast asleep while I am talking to him, for he is so immensely absent he don't hear one half that one says; only conceive how horrid!"

"But why, then, do you encourage him? why do you take any notice of him?"

"O, every

"O, every body does, I assure you, else I would not for the world; but he is so courted you have no idea. However, of all things let me advise you never to dance with him; I did once myself, and I declare I was quite distressed to death the whole time, for he was taken with such a fit of absence he knew nothing he was about, sometimes skipping and jumping with all the violence in the world, just as if he only danced for exercise, and sometimes standing quite still, or lolling against the wainscoat and gaping, and taking no more notice of me than if he had never seen me in his life!"

The Captain now, again advancing to Cecilia, said, "So you would not do us the honour to try the masquerade at the Pantheon? however, I hear you had a very brilliant spectacle at Mr. Harrel's. I was quite *au desespoir* that I could not have the honour of sliding in; I did *mon possible*, but it was quite beyond me."

Cecilia now, growing very impatient to hear the Opera, begged to know if they might not make a trial to get into the pit?

"I fear," said the captain, smiling as they passed him, without offering any assistance, "you will find it extreme petrifying; for my part, I confess I am not upon the principle of crowding."

The ladies, however, accompanied by Mr. Arnott, made the attempt, and soon found, according

according to the custom of report, that the difficulty, for the pleasure of talking of it, had been considerably exaggerated. They were separated indeed, but their accommodation was tolerably good.

Cecilia was much vexed to find the first act of the opera almost over; but she was soon still more dissatisfied when she discovered that she had no chance of hearing the little which remained: the place she had happened to find vacant was next to a party of young ladies, who were so earnestly engaged in their own discourse, that they listened not to a note of the opera, and so infinitely diverted with their own witticisms, that their tittering and loquacity allowed no one in their vicinity to hear better than themselves. Cecilia tried in vain to confine her attention to the singers, she was distant from the stage, and to them she was near, and her fruitless attempts all ended in chagrin and impatience.

At length she resolved to make an effort for entertainment in another way, and since the expectations which brought her to the Opera were desroyed, to try, by listening to her fair neighbours, whether those who occasioned her disappointment, could make her any amends.

For this purpose she turned to them wholly; yet was at first in no little perplexity to understand what was going forward, since so universal

universal was the eagerness for talking, and so unsurmountable the antipathy to listening, that every one seemed to have her wishes bounded by a continual utterance of words, without waiting for any answer, or scarce even desiring to be heard.

But when, somewhat more used to their dialect and manner, she began better to comprehend their discourse, wretchedly indeed did it supply to her the loss of the Opera. She heard nothing but descriptions of trimmings, and complaints of hair-dressers, hints of conquest that teemed with vanity, and histories of engagements which were inflated with exultation.

At the end of the act, by the crowding forward of the gentlemen to see the dance, Mrs. Harrel had an opportunity of making room for her by herself, and she had then some reason to expect hearing the rest of the Opera in peace, for the company before her, consisting entirely of young men, seemed, even during the dance, fearful of speaking, lest their attention should be drawn for a moment from the stage.

But, to her infinite surprize, no sooner was the second act begun, than their attention ended! they turned from the performers to each other, and entered into a whispering, but gay conversation, which though not loud enough to disturb the audience in general, kept in the ears of their neighbours, a buz-

zing which interrupted all pleasure from the representation. Of this effect of their gaiety it seemed uncertain whether they were conscious, but very evident that they were careless.

The desperate resource which she had tried during the first act, of seeking entertainment from the very conversation which prevented her enjoying it, was not now even in her power: for these gentlemen, though as negligent as the young ladies had been whom they disturbed, were much more cautious whom they instructed: their language was ambiguous, and their terms, to Cecilia, were unintelligible: their subjects, indeed, required some discretion, being nothing less than a ludicrous calculation of the age and duration of jointured widows, and of the chances and expectations of unmarried young ladies.

But what more even than their talking provoked her, was finding that the moment the act was over, when she cared not if their vociferation had been incessant, one of them called out, "Come, be quiet, the dance is begun;" and then they were again all silent attention!

In the third act, however, she was more fortunate; the gentlemen again changed their places, and they were succeeded by others who came to the Opera not to hear themselves but the performers: and as soon

as

as she was permitted to listen, the voice of Pacchierotti took from her all desire to hear any thing but itself.

During the last dance she was discovered by Sir Robert Floyer, who, sauntering down fop's alley, stationed himself by her side, and whenever the *figurante* relieved the principal dancers, turned his eyes from the stage to her face, as better worth his notice, and equally destined for his amusement.

Mr. Monckton too, who for some time had seen and watched her, now approached; he had observed with much satisfaction that her whole mind had been intent upon the performance, yet still the familiarity of Sir Robert Floyer's admiration disturbed and perplexed him; he determined, therefore, to make an effort to satisfy his doubts by examining into his intentions; and, taking him apart, before the dance was quite over, "Well," he said, "who is so handsome here as Harrel's ward?"

"Yes," answered he, calmly, "she is handsome, but I don't like her expression."

"No? why, what is the fault of it?"

"Proud, cursed proud. It is not the sort of woman I like. If one says a civil thing to her, she only wishes one at the devil for one's pains."

"O, you have tried her, then, have you? why you are not, in general, much given to say civil things."

"Yes,

"Yes, you know I said something of that sort to her once about Juliet, at the rehearsal. Were not you by?"

"What then, was that all? and did you imagine one compliment would do your business with her?"

"O, hang it, who ever dreams of complimenting the women now? that's all at an end."

"You won't find she thinks so, though; for, as you well say, her pride is insufferable; and I, who have long known her, can assure you it does not diminish upon intimacy."

"Perhaps not—but there's very pretty picking in 3,000*l.* per annum! one would not think much of a little incumbrance upon such an estate."

"Are you quite sure the estate is so considerable? Report is mightily given to magnify."

"O, I have pretty good intelligence: though, after all, I don't know but I may be off; she'll take a confounded deal of time and trouble."

Monckton, too much a man of interest and of the world to cherish that delicacy which covets universal admiration for the object of its fondness, then artfully enlarged upon the obstacles he already apprehended, and insinuated such others as he believed would be most likely to intimidate him. But

his subtlety was lost upon the impenetrable Baronet, who possessed that hard insensibility which obstinately pursues its own course, deaf to what is said, and indifferent to what is thought.

Meanwhile the ladies were now making way to the coffee-room, though very slowly on account of the crowd; and just as they got near the lobby, Cecilia perceived Mr. Belfield, who, immediately making himself known to her, was offering his service to hand her out of the pit, when Sir Robert Floyer, not seeing or not heeding him, pressed forward, and said, "Will you let me have the honour, Miss Beverley, of taking care of you?"

Cecilia, to whom he grew daily more disagreeable, coldly declined his assistance, while she readily accepted that which had first been offered her by Mr. Belfield.

The haughty Baronet, extremely nettled, forced his way on, and rudely stalking up to Mr. Belfield, motioned with his hand for room to pass him, and said, "Make way, Sir!"

"Make way for *me*, Sir!" cried Belfield, opposing him with one hand, while with the other he held Cecilia.

"You, Sir? and who are you, Sir?" demanded the Baronet, disdainfully.

"Of that, Sir, I shall give you an account

count whenever you please," answered Belfield, with equal scorn.

"What the devil do you mean, Sir?"

"Nothing very difficult to be understood," replied Belfield, and attempted to draw on Cecilia, who, much alarmed, was shrinking back.

Sir Robert then, swelling with rage, reproachfully turned to her and said, "Will you suffer such an impertinent fellow as that, Miss Beverley, to have the honour of taking your hand?"

Belfield, with great indignation, demanded what he meant by the term impertinent fellow; and Sir Robert, yet more insolently repeated it: Cecilia, extremely shocked, earnestly besought them both to be quiet; but Belfield, at the repetition of this insult, hastily let go her hand, and put his own upon his sword, while Sir Robert, taking advantage of his situation, in being a step higher than his antagonist, fiercely pushed him back, and descended into the lobby.

Belfield, enraged beyond endurance, instantly drew his sword, and Sir Robert was preparing to follow his example, when Cecilia, in an agony of fright, called out, "Good Heaven! will nobody interfere?" And then a young man, forcing his way through the crowd, exclaimed, "For shame, for shame, gentlemen! is this a place for such violence?"

Belfield, endeavouring to recover himself, put up his sword, and though in a voice half choaked with passion, said, "I thank you, Sir! I was off my guard. I beg pardon of the whole company."

Then, walking up to Sir Robert, he put into his hand a card with his name and direction, saying, "With you, Sir, I shall be happy to settle what apologies are necessary at your first leisure;" and hurried away.

Sir Robert, exclaiming aloud that he should soon teach him to whom he had been so impertinent, was immediately going to follow him, when the affrighted Cecilia again called out aloud, "Oh stop him!—good God! will nobody stop him!"

The rapidity with which this angry scene had passed had filled her with amazement, and the evident resentment of the Baronet upon her refusing his assistance, gave her an immediate consciousness that she was herself the real cause of the quarrel; while the manner in which he was preparing to follow Mr. Belfield, convinced her of the desperate scene which was likely to succeed; fear, therefore, overcoming every other feeling, forced from her this exclamation before she knew what she said.

The moment she had spoken, the young man who had already interposed again rushed forward, and seizing Sir Robert by the arm, warmly remonstrated against the violence

lence of his proceedings, and being presently seconded by other gentlemen, almost compelled him to give up his design.

Then, hastening to Cecilia, "Be not alarmed, madam," he cried, "all is over, and every body is safe."

Cecilia, finding herself thus addressed by a gentleman she had never before seen, felt extremely ashamed of having rendered her interest in the debate so apparent; she courtsied to him in some confusion, and taking hold of Mrs. Harrel's arm, hurried her back into the pit, in order to quit a crowd, of which she now found herself the principal object.

Curiosity, however, was universally excited, and her retreat served but to inflame it: some of the ladies, and most of the gentlemen, upon various pretences, returned into the pit merely to look at her, and in a few minutes the report was current that the young lady who had been the occasion of the quarrel, was dying with love for Sir Robert Floyer.

Mr. Monckton, who had kept by her side during the whole affair, felt thunder struck by the emotion she had shewn; Mr. Arnott too, who had never quitted her, wished himself exposed to the same danger as Sir Robert, so that he might be honoured with the same concern: but they were both too much the dupes of their own apprehensions and jea-

lousy, to perceive that what they instantly imputed to fondness, proceeded simply from general humanity, accidentally united with the consciousness of being accessary to the quarrel.

The young stranger, who had officiated as mediator between the disputants, in a few moments followed her with a glass of water, which he had brought from the coffee-room, begging her to drink it and compose herself.

Cecilia, though she declined his civility with more vexation than gratitude, perceived, as she raised her eyes to thank him, that her new friend was a young man very strikingly elegant in his address and appearance.

Miss Larolles next, who, with her party, came back into the pit, ran up to Cecilia, crying, "O my dear creature, what a monstrous shocking thing! You've no idea how I am frightened; do you know I happened to be quite at the further end of the coffee-room when it began, and could not get out to see what was the matter for ten ages; only conceive what a situation!"

"Would your fright, then, have been less," said Cecilia, "had you been nearer the danger?"

"O Lord no, for when I came within sight I was fifty times worse! I gave such a monstrous scream, that it quite made Mr. Meadows start. I dare say he'll tell me of it these hundred years: but really when I saw them

them draw their swords, I thought I should have died; I was so amazingly surprized you've no notion."

Here she was interrupted by the re-appearance of the active stranger, who again advancing to Cecilia, said, "I am in doubt whether the efforts I make to revive will please or irritate you, but though you rejected the last cordial I ventured to present you, perhaps you will look with a more favourable eye towards that of which I am now the herald."

Cecilia then casting her eyes around, saw that he was followed by Sir Robert Floyer. Full of displeasure both at this introduction and at his presence, she turned hastily to Mr. Arnott, and entreated him to enquire if the carriage was not ready.

Sir Robert, looking at her with all the exultation of new-raised vanity, said, with more softness than he had ever before addressed her, "Have you been frightened?"

"Every body, I believe, was frightened," answered Cecilia, with an air of dignity intended to check his rising expectations.

"There was no sort of cause," answered he: "the fellow did not know whom he spoke to, that was all."

"Lord, Sir Robert," cried Miss Larolles, "how could you be so shocking as to draw your sword? you can't conceive how horrid it looked."

" Why I did not draw my sword," cried he, " I only had my hand on the hilt."

" Lord, did not you, indeed? well, every body said you did, and I'm sure I thought I saw five-and-twenty swords all at once. I thought one of you would be killed every moment. It was horrid disagreeable, I assure you."

Sir Robert was now called away by some gentlemen; and Mr. Monckton, earnest to be better informed of Cecilia's real sentiments, said, with affected concern, " At present this matter is merely ridiculous; I am sorry to think in how short a time it may become more important."

" Surely," cried Cecilia, with quickness, " some of their friends will interfere! surely upon so trifling a subject they will not be so mad, so inexcuseable, as to proceed to more serious resentment!"

" Which ever of them," said the stranger, " is most honoured by this anxiety, will be mad indeed to risk a life so valued!"

" Cannot you, Mr. Monckton," continued Cecilia, too much alarmed to regard this insinuation, " speak with Mr. Belfield? You are acquainted with him, I know: is it impossible you can follow him?"

" I will with pleasure do whatever you wish; but still if Sir Robert——"

" O, as to Sir Robert, Mr. Harrel, I am very sure, will undertake him; I will try to

se

see him to night myself, and entreat him to exert all his influence."

"Ah, madam," cried the stranger, archly, and lowering his voice, "those *French beads* and *Bristol stones* have not, I find, shone in vain!"

At these words Cecilia recognized her white domino acquaintance at the masquerade; she had before recollected his voice, but was too much perturbed to consider where or when she had heard it.

"If Mr. Briggs," continued he, "does not speedily come forth with his plum friend, before the glittering of swords and spears is joined to that of jewels, the glare will be so resplendent, that he will fear to come within the influence of its rays. Though, perhaps, he may only think the stronger the light, the better he shall see to count his guineas: for as

"——— in ten thousand pounds
"Ten thousand charms are centred,"

in an hundred thousand the charms may have such magic power, that he may defy the united efforts of tinsel and knight errantry to deliver you from the golden spell."

Here the Captain, advancing to Cecilia, said, "I have been looking for you in vain *partout*, but the crowd has been so *accablant* I was almost reduced to despair. Give me

leave to hope you are now recovered from the *horreur* of this little *fracas?*

Mr. Arnott then brought intelligence that the carriage was ready. Cecilia, glad to be gone, instantly hastened to it; and, as she was conducted by Mr. Monckton, most earnestly entreated him to take an active part, in endeavouring to prevent the fatal consequences with which the quarrel seemed likely to terminate.

CHAPTER V.

A FASHIONABLE FRIEND.

AS soon as they returned home, Cecilia begged Mrs. Harrel not to lose a moment before she tried to acquaint Mr. Harrel with the state of the affair. But that lady was too helpless to know in what manner to set about it; she could not tell where he was, she could not conjecture where he might be.

Cecilia then rang for his own man, and upon enquiry, heard that he was, in all probability, at Brookes's, in St. James's Street.

She then begged Mrs. Harrel would write to him.

Mrs. Harrel knew not what to say.

Cecilia, therefore, equally quick in forming and executing her designs, wrote to him herself, and entreated that without losing an instant he would find out his friend Sir Robert Floyer, and endeavour to effect an accommodation between him and Mr. Belfield, with whom he had a dispute at the Opera-house.

The man soon returned with an answer that Mr. Harrel would not fail to obey her commands.

She determined to sit up till he came home, in order to learn the event of the negociation. She considered herself as the efficient cause of the quarrel, yet scarce knew how or in what to blame herself; the behaviour of Sir Robert had always been offensive to her; she disliked his manners, and detested his boldness; and she had already shewn her intention to accept the assistance of Mr. Belfield, before he had followed her with an offer of his own. She was uncertain, indeed, whether he had remarked what had passed; but she had reason to think that, so circumstanced, to have changed her purpose, would have been construed into an encouragement that might have authorised his future presumption of her favour. All she could find to regret, with regard to herself,

was wanting the presence of mind to have refused the civilities of both.

Mrs. Harrel, though really sorry at the state of the affair, regarded herself as so entirely unconcerned in it, that, easily wearied when out of company, she soon grew sleepy, and retired to her own room.

The anxious Cecilia, hoping every instant the return of Mr. Harrel, sat up by herself: but it was not till near four o'clock in the morning that he made his appearance.

"Well, sir," cried she, the moment she saw him, "I fear by your coming home so late you have had much trouble, but I hope it has been successful?"

Great, however, was her mortification, when he answered that he had not even seen the Baronet, having been engaged himself in so particular a manner, that he could not possibly break from his party till past three o'clock, at which time he drove to the house of Sir Robert, but heard that he was not yet come home.

Cecilia, though much disgusted by such a specimen of insensibility towards a man whom he pretended to call his friend, would not leave him till he had promised to arise as soon as it was light, and make an effort to recover the time lost.

She was now no longer surprized either at the debts of Mr. Harrel, or at his *particular occasions* for money. She was convinced he spent

spent half the night in gaming, and the consequences, however dreadful, were but natural. That Sir Robert Floyer also did the same, was a matter of much less importance to her; but that the life of any man should through her means be endangered, disturbed her inexpressibly.

She went, however, to bed, but arose again at six o'clock, and dressed herself by candle light. In an hour's time she sent to enquire if Mr. Harrel was stirring, and hearing he was asleep, gave orders to have him called. Yet he did not rise till eight o'clock, nor could all her messages or expostulations drive him out of the house till nine.

He was scarcely gone before Mr. Monckton arrived, who now for the first time had the satisfaction of finding her alone.

"You are very good for coming so early," cried she; "have you seen Mr. Belfield? Have you had any conversation with him?"

Alarmed at her eagerness, and still more at seeing by her looks the sleepless night she had passed, he made at first no reply; and when, with increasing impatience, she repeated her question, he only said, "Has Belfield ever visited you since he had the honour of meeting you at my house?"

"No, never."

"Have you seen him often in public?"

"No, I have never seen him at all but the

the evening Mrs. Harrel received masks, and last night at the Opera."

"Is it then for the safety of Sir Robert you are so extremely anxious?"

"It is for the safety of both: the cause of their quarrel was so trifling, that I cannot bear to think its consequence should be serious."

"But do you not wish better to one of them than to the other?"

"As a matter of justice I do, but not from any partiality: Sir Robert was undoubtedly the aggressor, and Mr. Belfield, though at first too fiery, was certainly ill used."

The candour of this speech recovered Mr. Monckton from his apprehensions; and carefully observing her looks while he spoke, he gave her the following account:

'That he had hastened to Belfield's lodgings the moment he had left the Opera-house, and, after repeated denials, absolutely forced himself into his room, where he was quite alone, and in much agitation: he conversed with him for more than an hour upon the subject of the quarrel, but found he so warmly resented the personal insult given him by Sir Robert, that no remonstrance had any effect in making him alter his resolution of demanding satisfaction.'

"And could you bring him to consent to

to no compromise before you left him?" cried Cecilia.

"No; for before I got to him—the challenge had been sent."

"The challenge! good Heaven!—and do you know the event?"

"I called again this morning at his lodgings, but he was not returned home."

"And was it impossible to follow him? Were there no means to discover whither he was gone?"

"None; to elude all pursuit, he went out before any body in the house was stirring, and took his servant with him."

"Have you then been to Sir Robert?"

"I have been to Cavendish-Square, but there, it seems, he has not appeared all night; I traced him, through his servants, from the Opera to a gaming house, where I found he had amused himself till this morning."

The uneasiness of Cecilia now encreased every moment; and Mr. Monekton, seeing he had no other chance of satisfying her, offered his service to go again in search of both the gentlemen, and endeavour to bring her better information. She accepted the proposal with gratitude, and he departed.

Soon after, she was joined by Mr. Arnott, who, though seized with all the horrors of jealousy at sight of her apprehensions, was so desirous to relieve them, that without even making any merit of obliging her, he almost instantly

instantly set out upon the same errand that employed Mr. Monckton, and determined not to mention his design till he found whether it would enable him to bring her good tidings.

He was scarce gone when she was told that Mr. Delvile begged to have the honour of speaking to her. Surprised at this condescension, she desired he might immediately be admitted; but much was her surprise augmented, when, instead of seeing her ostentatious guardian, she again beheld her masquerade friend, the white domino.

He intreated her pardon for an intrusion neither authorized by acquaintance nor by business, though somewhat, he hoped, palliated, by his near connection with one who was privileged to take an interest in her affairs: and then, hastening to the motives which had occasioned his visit, "When I had the honour," he said, "of seeing you last night at the Opera-house, the dispute which had just happened between two gentlemen, seemed to give you an uneasiness which could not but be painful to all who observed it, and as among that number I was not the least moved, you will forgive, I hope, my eagerness to be the first to bring you intelligence that nothing fatal has happened, or is likely to happen."

"You do me, Sir, said Cecilia, "much honour; and indeed you relieve me from a

suspence extremely disagreeable. The accommodation, I suppose, was brought about this morning?"

"I find," answered he, smiling, "you now expect too much; but hope is never so elastic as when it springs from the ruins of terror."

"What then is the matter? Are they, at last, not safe".

"Yes, perfectly safe; but I cannot tell you they have never been in danger."

"Well, if it is now over I am contented: but you will very much oblige me, Sir, if you will inform me what has passed."

"You oblige me, madam, by the honour of your commands. I saw but too much reason to apprehend that measures the most violent would follow the affray of last night; yet as I found that the quarrel had been accidental, and the offence unpremeditated, I thought it not absolutely impossible that an expeditious mediation might effect a compromise: at least it was worth trying: for though wrath slowly kindled or long nourished is sullen and untractable, the sudden anger that has not had time to impress the mind with a deep sense of injury, will, when gently managed, be sometimes appeased with the same quickness it is excited: I hoped, therefore, that some trifling concession from Sir Robert, as the aggressor,—"

"Ah,

"Ah, sir!" cried Cecilia, "that, I fear, was not to be obtained!"

"Not by me, I must own," he answered; but I was not willing to think of the difficulty, and therefore ventured to make the proposal: nor did I leave the Opera-house till I had used every possible argument to persuade Sir Robert an apology would neither stain his courage nor his reputation. But his spirit brooked not the humiliation."

"Spirit!" cried Cecilia, "how mild a word! What, then, could poor Mr. Belfield resolve upon?"

"That, I believe, took him very little time to decide. I discovered by means of a gentleman at the Opera, who was acquainted with him, where he lived, and I waited upon him with an intention to offer my services towards settling the affair by arbitration: for since you call him *poor* Mr. Belfield, I think you will permit me, without offence to his antagonist, to own that his gallantry, though too impetuous for commendation, engaged me in his interest."

"I hope you don't think," cried Cecilia, "that an offence to his antagonist must necessarily be an offence to me?"

"Whatever I may have thought," answered he, looking at her with evident surprise, "I certainly did not wish that a sympathy offensive and defensive had been concluded

cluded between you. I could not, however, gain access to Mr. Belfield last night, but the affair dwelt upon my mind, and this morning I called at his lodgings, as soon as it was light."

"How good you have been!" cried Cecilia; "your kind offices have not, I hope, all proved ineffectual!"

"So valorous a Don Quixote," returned he, laughing, "certainly merited a faithful Esquire! he was, however, gone out, and nobody knew whither. About half an hour ago I called upon him again; he was then just returned home."

"Well, Sir?"

"I saw him; the affair was over; and in a short time he will be able, if you will allow him so much honour, to thank you for these enquiries."

"He is then wounded?"

"He is a little hurt, but Sir Robert is perfectly safe. Belfield fired first, and missed; the Baronet was not so successless."

"I am grieved to hear it, indeed! and where is the wound?"

"The ball entered his right side, and the moment he felt it, he fired his second pistol in the air. This I heard from his servant. He was brought home carefully and slowly; no surgeon had been upon the spot, but one was called to him immediately. I stayed to enquire his opinion after the wound had been dressed:

dressed: he told me he had extracted the ball, and assured me Mr. Belfield was not in any danger. Your alarm, madam, last night, which had always been present to me, then encouraged me to take the liberty of waiting upon you; for I concluded you could yet have had no certain intelligence, and thought it best to let the plain and simple fact outrun the probable exaggeration of rumour."

Cecilia thanked him for his attention; and Mrs. Harrel then making her appearance, he arose and said, "Had my father known the honour I have had this morning of waiting upon Miss. Beverley, I am sure I should have been charged with his compliments, and such a commission would somewhat have lessened the presumption of this visit; but I feared lest while I should be making interest for my credentials, the pretence of my embassy might be lost, and other couriers, less scrupulous, might obtain previous audiences, and anticipate my dispatches."

He then took his leave.

"This white domino, at last, then," said Cecilia, is the son of Mr. Delvile! and thence the knowledge of my situation which gave me so much surprise:—a son how infinitely unlike his father!"

"Yes," said Mrs. Harrel, "and as unlike his mother too, for I assure you she is more proud and haughty even than the old gentleman. I hate the very sight of her,

for

for she keeps every body in such awe that there's nothing but restraint in her presence. But the son is a very pretty young man, and much admired; though I have only seen him in public, for none of the family visit here."

Mr. Monckton, who now soon returned, was not a little surprised to find that all the intelligence he meant to communicate was already known: and not the more pleased to hear that the white domino, to whom before he owed no good-will, had thus officiously preceded him.

Mr. Arnott, who also came just after him, had been so little satisfied with the result of his enquiries, that from the fear of encreasing the uneasiness of Cecilia, he determined not to make known whither he had been; but he soon found his forbearance was of no avail, as she was already acquainted with the duel and its consequences. Yet his unremitting desire to oblige her urged him twice in the course of the same day to again call at Mr. Belfield's lodgings, in order to bring her thence fresh and unsolicited intelligence.

Before breakfast was quite over, Miss Larolles, out of breath with eagerness, came to tell the news of the duel, in her way to *church*, as it was Sunday morning! and soon after Mrs. Mears, who also was followed by other ladies, brought the same account, which

which by all was addressed to Cecilia, with expressions of concern that convinced her, to her infinite vexation, she was generally regarded as the person chiefly interested in the accident.

Mr. Harrel did not return till late, but then seemed in very high spirits: "Miss Beverley," he cried, "I bring you news that will repay all your fright; Sir Robert is not only safe, but is come off conqueror."

"I am very sorry, Sir," answered Cecilia, extremely provoked to be thus congratulated, "that any body conquered, or any body was vanquished."

"There is no need for sorrow," cried Mr. Harrel, "or for any thing but joy, for he has not killed his man; the victory, therefore, will neither cost him a flight nor a trial. To-day he means to wait upon you, and lay his laurels at your feet."

"He means, then, to take very fruitless trouble," said Cecilia, "for I have not any ambition to be so honoured."

"Ah, Miss Beverley," returned he, laughing, "this won't do now! it might have passed a little while ago, but it won't do now, I promise you!"

Cecilia, though much displeased by this accusation, found that disclaiming it only excited further raillery, and therefore prevailed upon

upon herself to give him a quiet hearing, and scarce any reply.

At dinner, when Sir Robert arrived, the dislike she had originally taken to him, encreased already into disgust by his behaviour the preceding evening, was now fixed into the strongest aversion by the horror she conceived of his fierceness, and the indignation she felt excited by his arrogance. He seemed, from the success of this duel, to think himself raised to the highest pinnacle of human glory; triumph sat exulting on his brow; he looked down on whoever he deigned to look at all, and shewed that he thought his notice an honour, however imperious the manner in which it was accorded.

Upon Cecilia, however, he cast an eye of more complacency; he now believed her subdued, and his vanity revelled in the belief: her anxiety had so thoroughly satisfied him of her love, that she had hardly the power left to undeceive him; her silence he only attributed to admiration, her coldness to fear, and her reserve to shame.

Sickened by insolence so undisguised and unauthorised, and incensed at the triumph of his successful brutality, Cecilia with pain kept her seat, and with vexation reflected upon the necessity she was under of passing so large a portion of her time in company to which she was so extremely averse.

After

After dinner, when Mrs. Harrel was talking of her party for the evening, of which Cecilia declined making one, Sir Robert, with a sort of proud humility, that half feared rejection, and half proclaimed an indifference to meeting it, said, "I don't much care for going further myself, if Miss Beverley will give me the honour of taking my tea with her."

Cecilia, regarding him with much surprise, answered, that she had letters to write into the country, which would confine her to her own room for the rest of the evening. The Baronet, looking at his watch, instantly cried, "Faith, that is very fortunate, for I have just recollected an engagement at the other end of the town, which had slipped my memory."

Soon after they were all gone, Cecilia received a note from Mrs. Delvile, begging the favour of her company the next morning to breakfast. She readily accepted the invitation, though she was by no means prepared, by the character she had heard of her, to expect much pleasure from an acquaintance with that lady.

CHAPTER VI.

A FAMILY PARTY.

CECILIA the next morning, between nine and ten o'clock, went to St James's-square: she found nobody immediately ready to receive her, but in a short time was waited upon by Mr. Delvile.

After the usual salutations, "Miss Beverley," he said, "I have given express orders to my people, that I may not be interrupted while I have the pleasure of passing some minutes in conversation with you, before you are presented to Mrs Delvile."

And then, with an air of solemnity, he led her to a seat; and having himself taken possession of another, continued his speech.

"I have received information, from authority which I cannot doubt, that the indiscretion of certain of your admirers last Saturday at the Opera-house, occasioned a disturbance, which to a young woman of delicacy I should imagine must be very alarming: now as I consider myself concerned in your fame and welfare, from regarding you as my ward, I think it is incumbent upon me to make enquiries into such of your affairs as

become public; for I should feel in some measure disgraced myself, should it appear to the world, while you are under my guardianship, that there was any want of propriety in the direction of your conduct."

Cecilia, not much flattered by this address, gravely answered, that she fancied the affair had been misrepresented to him.

"I am not much addicted," he replied, "to give ear to any thing lightly; you must therefore permit me to enquire into the merits of the cause, and then to draw my own inferences. And let me, at the same time, assure you, there is no other young lady who has any right to expect such an attention from me. I must begin by begging you to inform me, upon what grounds the two gentlemen in question, for such, by courtesy, I presume they are called, thought themselves entitled publicly to dispute your favour?"

"My favour, Sir!" cried Cecilia, much amazed.

"My dear," said he, with a complacency meant to give her courage, "I know the question is difficult for a young lady to answer; but be not abashed, I should be sorry to distress you, and mean to the utmost of my power to save your blushes. Do not, therefore, fear me; consider me as your guardian, and assure yourself I am perfectly well disposed to consider you as my ward.

Acquaint me, then, freely, what are the pretensions of these gentlemen?"

"To me, Sir, they have, I believe, no pretensions at all."

"I see you are shy," returned he, with encreasing gentleness; "I see you cannot be easy with me; and when I consider how little you are accustomed to me, I do not wonder. But pray take courage; I think it necessary to inform myself of your affairs, and therefore I beg you will speak to me with freedom."

Cecilia, more and more mortified by this humiliating condescension, again assured him he had been misinformed; and was again, though discredited, praised for her modesty; when to her great relief, they were interrupted by the entrance of her friend the *white domino*.

"Mortimer," said Mr. Delvile, "I understand you have already had the pleasure of seeing this young lady?"

"Yes, Sir," he answered: "I have more than once had that happiness, but I have never had the honour of being introduced to her."

"Miss Beverley, then," said the father, "I must present to you Mr. Mortimer Delvile, my son; and, Mortimer, in Miss Beverley I desire you will remember that you respect a ward of your father's."

"I will not, Sir," answered he, "forget

an injunction my own inclinations had already out-run."

Mortimer Delvile was tall and finely formed; his features, though not handsome, were full of expression: and a noble openness of manners and address spoke the elegance of his education, and the liberality of his mind.

When this introduction was over, a more general conversation took place, till Mr. Delvile, suddenly rising, said to Cecilia, "You will pardon me, Miss Beverley, if I leave you for a few minutes; one of my tenants sets out to-morrow morning for my estate in the North, and he has been two hours waiting to speak with me. But if my son is not particularly engaged, I am sure he will be so good as to do the honours of the house till his mother is ready to receive you."

And then, graciously waving his hand, he quitted the room.

"My father," cried young Delvile, "has left me an office, which, could I execute it as perfectly as I shall willingly, would be performed without a fault."

"I am very sorry," said Cecilia, "that I have so much mistaken your hour of breakfast; but let me not be any restraint upon you; I shall find a book, or a newspaper, or something to fill up the time till Mrs. Delvile honours me with a summons."

"You can only be a restraint upon me," answered

answered he, "by commanding me from your presence. I breakfasted long ago, and am now just come from Mr. Belfield. I had the pleasure this morning, of being admitted into his room."

"And how, Sir, did you find him?"

"Not so well, I fear, as he thinks himself; but he was in high spirits, and surrounded by his friends, whom he was entertaining with all the gaiety of a man in full health, and entirely at his ease; though I perceived by the frequent changes of his countenance, signs of pain and indisposition, that made me, however pleased with his conversation, think it necessary to shorten my own visit, and to hint to those who were near me the propriety of leaving him quiet."

"Did you see his surgeon, Sir?"

"No; but he told me he should only have one dressing more of his wound, and then get rid of the whole business by running into the country."

"Were you acquainted with him, Sir, before this accident?"

"No, not at all; but the little I have seen of him has strongly interested me in his favour. At Mr. Harrel's masquerade, where I first met with him, I was extremely entertained by his humour,—though there, perhaps, as I had also the honour of first seeing Miss Beverley, I might be too happy to feel much difficulty in being pleased. And

even at the Opera he had the advantage of finding me in the same favourable disposition, as I had long distinguished you before I had taken any notice of him. I must, however, confess I did not think his anger that evening quite without provocation;—but I beg your pardon, I may perhaps be mistaken, and you who know the whole affair, must undoubtedly be better able to account for what happened."

Here he fixed his eyes upon Cecilia, with a look of curiosity that seemed eager to penetrate into her sentiments of the two antagonists.

"No, certainly," she answered; "he had all the provocation that ill-breeding could give him."

"And do you, madam," cried he, with much surprise, "judge of this matter with such severity?"

"No, not with severity; simply with candour."

"With candour? Alas, then, poor Sir Robert! Severity were not half so bad a sign for him!"

A servant now came in, to acquaint Cecilia that Mrs. Delvile waited breakfast for her.

This summons was immediately followed by the re-entrance of Mr. Delvile, who taking her hand, said he would himself present

sent her to his lady, and with much graciousness assured her of a kind reception.

The ceremonies preceding this interview, added to the character she had already heard of Mrs. Delvile, made Cecilia heartily wish it over; but, assuming all the courage in her power, she determined to support herself with a spirit that should struggle against the ostentatious superiority she was prepared to expect.

She found her seated upon a sofa, from which, however, she arose at her approach; but the moment Cecilia beheld her, all the unfavourable impressions with which she came into her presence immediately vanished, and that respect which the formalities of her introduction had failed to inspire, her air, figure, and countenance instantaneously excited.

She was not more than fifty years of age; her complexion, though faded, kept the traces of her former loveliness; her eyes, tho' they had lost their youthful fire, retained a lustre that evinced their primeval brilliancy; and the fine symmetry of her features, still uninjured by the siege of time, not only indicated the perfection of her juvenile beauty, but still laid claim to admiration in every beholder.

Her carriage was lofty and commanding; but the dignity to which high birth and conscious superiority gave rise, was so judiciously

regulated by good sense, and so happily blended with politeness, that though the world at large envied or hated her, the few for whom she had herself any regard, she was infallibly certain to captivate.

The surprise and admiration with which Cecilia at the first glance was struck, proved reciprocal: Mrs. Delvile, though prepared for youth and beauty, expected not to see a countenance so intelligent, nor manners so well formed as those of Cecilia: thus mutually astonished, and mutually pleased, their first salutations were accompanied by looks so flattering to both, that each saw in the other an immediate prepossession in her favour; and from the moment that they met, they seemed instinctively impelled to admire.

"I have promised Miss Beverley, madam," said Mr. Delvile to his lady, "that you would give her a kind reception; and I need not remind you that my promises are always held sacred."

"But I hope you have not also promised," cried she, with quickness, "that I should give *you* a kind reception, for I feel at this very moment extremely inclined to quarrel with you."

"Why so, madam?"

"For not bringing us together sooner; for now I have seen her, I already look back with regret to the time I have lost without the pleasure of knowing her."

"What

"What a claim is this," cried young Delvile, "upon the benevolence of Miss Beverley! for if she has not now the indulgence by frequent and diligent visits to make some reparation, she must consider herself as responsible for the dissention she will occasion."

"If peace depends upon my visits," answered Cecilia, "it may immediately be proclaimed; were it to be procured only by my absence, I know not if I should so readily agree to the conditions."

"I must request of you, madam," said Mr. Delvile, "that when my son and I retire, you will bestow half an hour upon this young lady, in making enquiries concerning the disturbance last Saturday at the Opera-house. I have not, myself, so much time to spare, as I have several appointments for this morning; but I am sure you will not object to the office, as I know you to be equally anxious with myself, that the minority of Miss Beverley should pass without reproach."

"Not only her minority, but her maturity," cried young Delvile, warmly; "and not only her maturity, but her decline of life will pass, I hope, not merely without reproach, but with fame and applause!"

"I hope so too," replied Mr. Delvile: "I wish her well through every stage of her life; but for her minority alone it is my

business to do more than wish. For that, I feel my own honour and my own credit concerned; my honour as I gave it to the Dean that I would superintend her conduct; and my credit, as the world is acquainted with the claim she has to my protection."

"I will not make any enquiries," said Mrs. Delvile, turning to Cecilia, with a sweetness that recompensed her for the haughtiness of her guardian, "till I have had some opportunity of convincing Miss Beverley, that my regard for her merits they should be answered."

"You see, Miss Beverley," said Mr. Delvile, "how little reason you had to be afraid of us; Mrs. Delvile is as much disposed in your favour as myself, and as desirous to be of service to you. Endeavour, therefore, to cast off this timidity, and to make yourself easy. You must come to us often; use will do more towards removing your fears, than all the encouragement we can give you."

"But what are the fears," cried Mrs. Delvile, "that Miss Beverley can have to remove? unless, indeed, she apprehends her visits will make us encroachers, and that the more we are favoured with her presence, the less we shall bear her absence."

"Pray, son," said Mr. Delvile, "what was the name of the person who was Sir Robert

bert Floyer's opponent? I have again forgotten it."

"Belfield, Sir."

"True; it is a name I am perfectly unacquainted with: however, he may possibly be a very good sort of man; but certainly his opposing himself to Sir Robert Floyer, a man of some family, a gentleman, rich, and allied to some people of distinction, was a rather strange circumstance. I mean not, however, to prejudge the case; I will hear it fairly stated; and I am the more disposed to be cautious in what I pronounce, because I am persuaded Miss Beverley has too much sense to let my advice be thrown away upon her."

"I hope so, Sir; but with respect to the disturbance at the Opera, I know not that I have the least occasion to trouble you."

"If your measures," said he, very gravely, "are already taken, the Dean, your uncle, prevailed upon me to accept a very useless office; but if any thing is yet undecided, it will not, perhaps, be amiss that I should be consulted. Mean time, I will only recommend to you to consider, that Mr. Belfield is a person whose name nobody has heard, and that a connection with Sir Robert Floyer would certainly be very honourable for you."

"Indeed, Sir," said Cecilia, "here is some great mistake; neither of these gentlemen, I believe, think of me at all."

"They have taken, then," cried young Delvile, with a laugh, "a very extraordinary method to prove their indifference!"

"The affairs of Sir Robert Floyer," continued Mr. Delvile, "are indeed, I am informed, in some disorder; but he has a noble estate, and your fortune would soon clear all its incumbrances: such an alliance, therefore, would be mutually advantageous. But what would result from a union with such a person as Mr. Belfield? He is of no family, though in that, perhaps, you would not be very scrupulous; but neither has he any money; what, then, recommends him?"

"To me, Sir, nothing!" answered Cecilia.

"And to me," cried young Delvile, "almost every thing! He has wit, spirit, and understanding; talents to create admiration; and qualities, I believe, to engage esteem!"

"You speak warmly," said Mrs. Delvile; "but if such is his character, he merits your earnestness. What is it you know of him?"

"Not enough, perhaps," answered he, "to coolly justify my praise; but he is one of those whose first appearance takes the mind by surprise, and leaves the judgment to make afterwards such terms as it can. Will you, madam, when he is recovered, permit me to introduce him to you?"

"Certainly," said she, smiling; "but have

have a care your recommendation does not disgrace your discernment."

"This warmth of disposition, Mortimer," cried Mr. Delvile, "produces nothing but difficulties and trouble: you neglect the connections I point out, and which a little attention might render serviceable as well as honourable, and run precipitately into forming such as can do you no good among people of rank, and are not only profitless in themselves, but generally lead you into expence and inconvenience. You are now of an age to correct this rashness: think, therefore, better of your own consequence, than thus idly to degrade yourself by forming friendships with every shewy adventurer that comes in your way."

"I know not, Sir," answered he, "how Mr. Belfield deserves to be called an adventurer: he is not, indeed, rich; but he is in a profession where parts such as his seldom fail to acquire riches; however, as to me his wealth can be of no consequence, why should my regard to him wait for it? if he is a young man of worth and honour——"

"Mortimer," interrupted Mr. Delvile, "whatever he is, we know he is not a man of rank; and whatever he may be, we know he cannot become a man of family, and consequently for Mortimer Delvile he is no companion. If you can render him any service,

vice, I shall commend your so doing; it becomes your birth, it becomes your station in life to assist individuals, and promote the general good: but never in your zeal for others forget what is due to yourself, and to the ancient and honourable house from which you are sprung."

"But can we entertain Miss Beverley with nothing better than family lectures?" cried Mrs. Delvile.

"It is for me," said young Delvile, rising, "to beg pardon of Miss Beverley for having occasioned them: but when she is so good as to honour us with her company again, I hope I shall have more discretion."

He then left the room; and Mr. Delvile also rising to go, said, "My dear, I commit you to very kind hands: Mrs. Delvile, I am sure, will be happy to hear your story; speak to her, therefore, without reserve. And pray don't imagine that I make you over to her from any slight; on the contrary, I admire and commend your modesty very much; but my time is extremely precious, and I cannot devote so much of it to an explanation as your diffidence requires."

And then, to the great joy of Cecilia, he retired; leaving her much in doubt whether his haughtiness or his condescension humbled her most.

"These men," said Mrs. Delvile, "can never comprehend the pain of a delicate female

male mind, upon entering into explanations of this sort: I understand it, however, too well to inflict it. We will, therefore, have no explanations at all till we are better acquainted; and then, if you will venture to favour me with any confidence, my best advice, and, should any be in my power, my best services shall be at your command."

"You do me, madam, much honour," answered Cecilia; "but I must assure you I have no explanation to give."

"Well, well, at present," returned Mrs. Delvile, "I am content to hear that answer, as I have acquired no right to any other: but hereafter I shall hope for more openness: it is promised me by your countenance, and I mean to claim the promise by my friendship."

"Your friendship will both honour and delight me, and whatever are your enquiries, I shall always be proud to answer them; but indeed, with regard to this affair——"

"My dear Miss Beverley," interrupted Mrs. Delvile, with a look of arch incredulity, "men seldom risk their lives where an escape is without hope of recompense. But we will not now say a word more upon the subject. I hope you will often favour me with your company, and by the frequency of your visits, make us both forget the shortness of our acquaintance."

Cecilia, finding her resistance only gave birth

birth to fresh suspicion, now yielded, satisfied that a very little time must unavoidably clear up the truth. But her visit was not therefore shortened; the sudden partiality with which the figure and countenance of Mrs. Delvile had impressed her, was quickly ripened into esteem by the charms of her conversation: she found her sensible, well bred, and high spirited, gifted by nature with superior talents, and polished by education and study with all the elegant embellishments of cultivation. She saw in her, indeed, some portion of the pride she had been taught to expect; but it was so much softened by elegance, and so well tempered with kindness, that it elevated her character without rendering her manners offensive.

With such a woman, subjects of discourse could never be wanting, nor fertility of powers to make them entertaining: and so much was Cecilia delighted with her visit, that though her carriage was announced at twelve o'clock, she reluctantly concluded it at two; and in taking her leave, gladly accepted an invitation to dine with her new friend three days after; who, equally pleased with her young guest, promised before that time to return her visit.

CHAPTER VII.

AN EXAMINATION.

CECILIA found Mrs. Harrel eagerly waiting to hear some account how she had passed the morning, and fully persuaded that she would leave the Delviles with a determination never more, but by necessity, to see them: she was, therefore, not only surprised but disappointed, when instead of fulfilling her expectations, she assured her that she had been delighted with Mrs. Delvile, whose engaging qualities amply recompensed her for the arrogance of her husband; that her visit had no fault but that of being too short; and that she had already appointed an early day for repeating it.

Mrs. Harrel was evidently hurt by this praise; and Cecilia, who perceived among all her guardians a powerful disposition to hatred and jealousy soon dropt the subject: though so much had she been charmed with Mrs. Delvile, that a scheme of removal once more occurred to her, notwithstanding her dislike of her stately guardian.

At dinner, as usual, they were joined by Sir Robert Floyer, who grew more and more assiduous

assiduous in his attendance, but who, this day, contrary to his general custom of remaining with the gentlemen, made his exit before the ladies left the table; and as soon as he was gone, Mr. Harrel desired a private conference with Cecilia.

They went together to the drawing-room, where, after a flourishing preface upon the merits of Sir Robert Floyer, he formally acquainted her that he was commissioned by that gentleman to make her a tender of his hand and fortune.

Cecilia, who had not much reason to be surprised at this overture, desired him to tell the Baronet, she was obliged to him for the honour he intended her, at the same time that she absolutely declined receiving it.

Mr. Harrel, laughing, told her this answer was very well for a beginning, though it would by no means serve beyond the first day of the declaration; but when Cecilia assured him she would firmly adhere to it, he remonstrated with equal surprise and discontent upon the reasons of her refusal. She thought it sufficient to tell him that Sir Robert did not please her; but, with much raillery, he denied the assertion credit, assuring her that he was universally admired by the ladies, that she could not possibly receive a more honourable offer, and that he was reckoned by every body the finest gentleman about the town. His fortune, he added, was

equally

equally unexceptionable with his figure and his rank in life; all the world, he was certain, would approve the connection, and the settlement made upon her should be dictated by herself.

Cecilia begged him to be satisfied with an answer which she never could change, and to spare her the enumeration of particular objections, since Sir Robert was wholly and in every respect disagreeable to her.

"What then," cried he, "could make you so frightened for him at the Opera-house? There has been but one opinion about town ever since of your prepossession in his favour."

"I am extremely concerned to hear it; my fright was but the effect of surprise, and belonged not more to Sir Robert than to Mr. Belfield."

He told her that nobody else thought the same; that her marriage with the Baronet was universally respected; and, in conclusion, notwithstanding her earnest desire that he would instantly and explicitly inform Sir Robert of her determination, he repeatedly refused to give him any final answer, till she had taken more time for consideration.

Cecilia was extremely displeased at this irksome importunity, and still more chagrined to find her incautious emotion at the Opera-house, had given rise to suspicions of her harbour-

harbouring a partiality for a man whom every day she more heartily disliked.

While she was deliberating in what manner she could clear up this mistake, which after she was left alone occupied all her thoughts, she was interrupted by the entrance of Mr. Monckton, whose joy in meeting her at length by herself exceeded not her own; for charmed as he was that he could now examine into the state of her affairs, she was not less delighted that she could make them known to him.

After mutual expressions, guarded, however, on the part of Mr. Monckton, though unreserved on that of Cecilia, of their satisfaction in being again able to converse as in former times, he asked if she would permit him, as the privilege of their long acquaintance, to speak to her with sincerity.

She assured him he could not more oblige her.

"Let me then," said he, "enquire if yet that ardent confidence in your own steadiness, which so much disdained my fears that the change of your residence might produce a change in your sentiments, is still as unshaken as when we parted in Suffolk? or whether experience, that foe to unpractised refinement, has already taught you the fallibility of theory?"

"When I assure you," replied Cecilia, "that your enquiry gives me no pain, I think

think I have sufficiently answered it; for were I conscious of any alteration, it could not but embarrass and distress me. Very far, however, from finding myself in the danger with which you threatened me, of *forgetting Bury, its inhabitants, and its environs*, I think with pleasure of little else, since London, instead of bewitching, has greatly disappointed me."

"How so?" cried Mr. Monckton, much delighted.

"Not," answered she, "in itself, not in its magnificence, nor in its diversions, which seem to be inexhaustible; but these, though copious as instruments of pleasure, are very shallow as sources of happiness: the disappointment, therefore, comes nearer home, and springs not from London, but from my own situation."

"Is that then disagreeable to you?"

"You shall yourself judge, when I have told you that from the time of my quitting your house till this very moment, when I have again the happiness of talking with you, I have never once had any conversation, society or intercourse, in which friendship or affection have had any share, or my mind has had the least interest."

She then entered into a detail of her way of life, told him how little suited to her taste was the unbounded dissipation of the Harrels, and feelingly expatiated upon the disappointment

ment she had received from the alteration in the manners and conduct of her young friend. "In her," she continued, "had I found the companion I came prepared to meet, the companion from whom I had so lately parted, and in whose society I expected to find consolation for the loss of yours and of Mrs. Charlton's, I should have complained of nothing; the very places that now tire, might then have entertained me; and all that passes for unmeaning dissipation, might have worn the appearance of variety and pleasure. But where the mind is wholly without interest, every thing is languid and insipid; and accustomed as I have long been to think friendship the first of human blessings, and social converse the greatest of human enjoyments, how ever can I reconcile myself to a state of careless indifference, to making acquaintance without any concern either for preserving or esteeming them, and to going on from day to day in an eager search of amusement, with no companion for the hours of retirement, and no view beyond that of passing the present moment in apparent gaiety and thoughtlessness!"

Mr. Monckton, who heard these complaints with secret rapture, far from seeking to soften or remove, used his utmost endeavours to strengthen and encrease them, by artfully retracing her former way of life, and pointing out with added censures the change

in it she had been lately compelled to make: "a change," he continued, "which, though ruinous of your time, and detrimental to your happiness, use will, I fear, familiarize, and familiarity render pleasant."

"These suspicions, Sir, said Cecilia, "mortify me greatly; and why, when far from finding me pleased, you hear nothing but repining, should you still continue to harbour them?"

"Because your trial has yet been too short to prove your firmness, and because there is nothing to which time cannot contentedly accustom us."

"I feel not much fear," said Cecilia, "of standing such a test as might fully satisfy you; but nevertheless, not to be too presumptuous, I have by no means exposed myself to all the dangers which you think surround me, for of late I have spent almost every evening at home and by myself."

This intelligence was to Mr. Monckton a surprise the most agreeable he could receive. Her distaste for the amusements which were offered her, greatly relieved his fears of her forming any alarming connection; and the discovery that while so anxiously he had sought her every where in public, she had quietly passed her time by her own fire-side, not only re-assured him for the present, but gave him information where he might meet with her in future.

He

He then talked of the duel, and solicitously led her to speak openly of Sir Robert Floyer: and here, too, his satisfaction was entire; he found her dislike of him such as his knowledge of her disposition made him expect; and she wholly removed his suspicions concerning her anxiety about the quarrel, by explaining to him her apprehensions of having occasioned it herself.

Neither did her confidence rest here; she acquainted him with the conversation she had just had with Mr. Harrel, and begged his advice in what manner she might secure herself from further importunity.

Mr. Monckton had now a new subject for his discernment. Every thing had confirmed to him the passion which Mr. Arnott had conceived for Cecilia, and he had therefore concluded the interest of the Harrels would be all in his favour: other ideas now struck him; he found that Mr. Arnott was given up for Sir Robert; and he determined carefully to watch the motions both of the Baronet and her young guardian, in order to discover the nature of their plans and connection. Mean time, convinced by her unaffected aversion to the proposals she had received, that she was at present in no danger from the league he suspected, he merely advised her to persevere in manifesting a calm repugnance to their solicitations, which could not fail, before long, to dishearten them both.

"But Sir," cried Cecilia, "I now fear this

this man as much as I dislike him, for his late fierceness and brutality, though they have encreased my disgust, make me dread to shew it. I am impatient, therefore, to have done with him, and to see him no more. And for this purpose, I wish to quit the house of Mr. Harrel, where he has access at his pleasure."

"You can wish nothing more judiciously," cried he; "would you, then, return into the country?"

"That is not yet in my power; I am obliged to reside with one of my guardians. To-day I have seen Mrs. Delvile, and—"

"Mrs. Delvile?" interrupted Mr. Monckton, in a voice of astonishment: "Surely you do not think of removing into that family?"

"What can I do so well? Mrs. Delvile is a charming woman, and her conversation would afford me more entertainment and instruction in a single day, than under this roof I should obtain in a twelvemonth."

"Are you serious? Do you really think of making such a change?"

"I really wish it, but I know not yet if it is practicable: on Thursday, however, I am to dine with her, and then, if it is in my power, I will hint to her my desire."

"And can Miss Beverley possibly wish," cried Mr. Monckton with earnestness, "to reside in such a house? Is not Mr. Delvile the most ostentatious, haughty, and self-

sufficient of men? Is not his wife the proudest of women? And is not the whole family odious to all the world?"

"You amaze me!" cried Cecilia; "surely that cannot be their general character? Mr. Delvile, indeed, deserves all the censure he can meet for his wearisome parade of superiority; but his Lady by no means merits to be included in the same reproach. I have spent this whole morning with her, and though I waited upon her with a strong prejudice in her disfavour, I observed in her no pride that exceeded the bounds of propriety and native dignity."

"Have you often been at the house? Do you know the Son too?"

"I have seen him three or four times."

"And what do you think of him?"

"I hardly know enough of him to judge fairly."

"But what does he seem to you? Do you not perceive in him already all the arrogance, all the contemptuous insolence of his Father?"

"O no! far from it indeed; his mind seems to be liberal and noble, open to impressions of merit, and eager to honour and promote it."

"You are much deceived: you have been reading your own mind, and thought you had read his; I would advise you sedulously to avoid the whole family; you will find all intercourse with them irksome and comfortless:

less: such as the father appears at once, the wife and the son will, in a few more meetings, appear also. They are descended from the same stock, and inherit the same self-complacency. Mr. Delvile married his cousin, and each of them instigates the other to believe that all birth and rank would be at an end in the world, if their own superb family had not a promise of support from their hopeful Mortimer. Should you precipitately settle yourself in their house, you would very soon be totally weighed down by their united insolence."

Cecilia again and warmly attempted to defend them; but Mr. Monckton was so positive in his assertions, and so significant in his insinuations to their discredit, that she was at length persuaded she had judged too hastily, and, after thanking him for his counsel, promised not to take any measures towards a removal without his advice.

This was all he desired; and now, enlivened by finding that his influence with her was unimpaired, and that her heart was yet her own, he ceased his exhortations, and turned the discourse to subjects more gay and general, judiciously cautious neither by tedious admonitions to disgust, nor by fretful solicitude to alarm her. He did not quit her till the evening was far advanced, and then, in returning to his own house, felt all his anxieties and disappointments recompensed by the comfort this long and satisfactory

conversation had afforded him. While Cecilia, charmed with having spent the morning with her new acquaintance, and the evening with her old friend, retired to rest better pleased with the disposal of her time than she had yet been since her journey from Suffolk.

CHAPTER VIII.

A Tête à Tête.

THE two following days had neither event nor disturbance, except some little vexation occasioned by the behaviour of Sir Robert Floyer, who still appeared not to entertain any doubt of the success of his addresses. This impertinent confidence she could only attribute to the officious encouragement of Mr. Harrel, and therefore she determined rather to seek than to avoid an explanation with him. But she had, in the mean time, the satisfaction of hearing from Mr. Arnott, who, ever eager to oblige her, was frequent in his enquiries, that Mr. Belfield was almost entirely recovered.

On Thursday, according to her appointment, she again went to St. James's-Square, and

and being shewn into the drawing-room till dinner was ready, found there only young Mr. Delvile.

After some general conversation, he asked her how lately she had any news of Mr. Belfield?

"This morning," she answered, "when I had the pleasure of hearing he was quite recovered. Have you seen him again, Sir?"

"Yes, madam, twice."

"And did you think him almost well?"

"I thought," answered he, with some hesitation, "and I think still, that your enquiries ought to be his cure."

"O," cried Cecilia, "I hope he has far better medicines: but I am afraid I have been misinformed, for I see you do not think him better."

"You must not, however," replied he, "blame those messengers whose artifice has only had your satisfaction in view; nor should I be so malignant as to blast their designs, if I did not fear that Mr. Belfield's actual safety may be endangered by your continued deception."

"What deception, Sir? I don't at all understand you. How is his safety endangered?"

"Ah, madam!" said he, smiling, "what danger indeed is there that any man would not risk to give birth to such solicitude! Mr. Belfield, however, I believe is in none from

which a command of yours cannot rescue him."

"Then were I an hard-hearted damsel indeed not to issue it! but if my commands are so medicinal, pray instruct me how to administer them."

"You must order him to give up, for the present, his plan of going into the country, where he can have no assistance, and where his wound must be dressed only by a common servant, and to remain quietly in town, till his surgeon pronounces that he may travel without any hazard."

"But is he, seriously, so mad as to intend leaving town without the consent of his surgeon?"

"Nothing less than such an intention could have induced me to undeceive you with respect to his recovery. But indeed I am no friend to those artifices which purchase present relief by future misery: I venture, therefore, to speak to you the simple truth, that by a timely exertion of your influence you may prevent further evil."

"I know not, Sir," said Cecilia with the utmost surprize, "why you should suppose I have any such influence: nor can I imagine that any deception has been practised."

"Is it possible?" answered he; "I may have been too much alarmed; but in such a case as this, no information ought to be depended

pended upon but that of his surgeon. You, madam, may probably know his opinion?"

"Me?—No, indeed! I never saw his surgeon; I know not even who he is."

"I purpose calling upon him to-morrow morning; will Miss Beverley permit me afterwards the honour of communicating to her what may pass?"

"I thank you, Sir," said she, colouring very high; "but my impatience is by no means so great as to occasion my giving you that trouble."

Delvile, perceiving her change of countenance, instantly, and with much respect, entreated her pardon for the proposal; which, however, she had no sooner granted, than he said very archly, "Why indeed you have not much right to be angry, since it was your own frankness that excited mine. And thus, you find, like most other culprits, I am ready to cast the blame of the offence upon the offended. I feel, however, an irresistible propensity to do service to Mr. Belfield;—shall I sin quite beyond forgiveness if I venture to tell you how I found him situated this morning?"

"No certainly,—if you wish it, I can have no objection."

"I found him, then, surrounded by a set of gay young men, who, by way of keeping up his spirits, made him laugh and talk without ceasing: he assured me himself that

he was perfectly well, and intended to gallop out of town to-morrow morning; though, when I shook hands with him at parting, I was both shocked and alarmed to feel, by the burning heat of his skin, that, far from discarding his surgeon, he ought rather to call in a physician."

"I am very much concerned to hear this account," said Cecilia; "but I do not well understand what you mean should on my part follow it?"

"That," answered he, bowing, with a look of mock gravity, "I pretend not to settle! In stating the case I have satisfied my conscience; and if in hearing it you can pardon the liberty I have taken, I shall as much honour the openness of your character, as I admire that of your countenance."

Cecilia now, to her no little astonishment, found she had the same mistake to clear up at present concerning Mr. Belfield, that only three days before she had explained with respect to the Baronet. But she had no time to speak further upon the subject, as the entrance of Mrs. Delvile put an end to their discourse.

That lady received her with the most distinguishing kindness; apologised for not sooner waiting upon her, and repeatedly declared that nothing but indisposition should have prevented her returning the favour of her first visit.

They

They were soon after summoned to dinner. Mr. Delvile, to the infinite joy of Cecilia, was out.

The day was spent greatly to her satisfaction. There was no interruption from visitors, she was tormented by the discussion of no disagreeable subjects, the duel was not mentioned, the antagonists were not hinted at, she was teazed with no self-sufficient encouragement, and wearied with no mortifying affability; the conversation at once was lively and rational, and though general, was rendered interesting, by a reciprocation of goodwill and pleasure in the conversers.

The favourable opinion she had conceived both of the mother and the son, this long visit served to confirm: in Mrs. Delvile she found strong sense, quick parts, and high breeding; in Mortimer, sincerity and vivacity joined with softness and elegance: and in both there seemed the most liberal admiration of talents, with an openness of heart that disdained all disguise. Greatly pleased with their manners, and struck with all that was apparent in their characters, she much regretted the prejudice of Mr. Monckton, which now, with the promise she had given him, was all that opposed her making an immediate effort towards a change in her abode.

She did not take her leave till eleven o'clock; when Mrs. Delvile, after repeatedly

thanking her for her visit, said she would not so much encroach upon her good-nature as to request another till she had waited upon her in return; but added, that she meant very speedily to pay that debt, in order to enable herself, by friendly and frequent meetings, to enter upon the confidential commission with which her guardian had entrusted her.

Cecilia was pleased with the delicacy which gave rise to this forbearance; yet having in fact nothing either to relate or conceal, she was rather sorry than glad at the delay of an explanation, since she found the whole family was in an error with respect to the situation of her affairs.

CHAPTER IX.

AN APPLICATION.

CECILIA, upon her return home, heard with some surprise that Mr. and Mrs. Harrel were by themselves in the drawing-room: and, while she was upon the stairs, Mrs. Harrel ran out, calling eagerly, "Is that my brother?"

Before

Before she could make an answer, Mr. Harrel, in the same impatient tone, exclaimed, "Is it Mr. Arnott?"

"No," said Cecilia; "did you expect him so late?"

"Expect him? Yes," answered Mr. Harrel, "I have expected him the whole evening, and cannot conceive what he has done with himself."

"'Tis abominably provoking," said Mrs. Harrel, "that he should be out of the way just now when he is wanted. However, I dare say to-morrow will do as well."

"I don't know that," cried Mr. Harrel; "Reeves is such a wretch that I am sure he will give me all the trouble in his power."

Here Mr. Arnott entered; and Mrs. Harrel called out, "O brother, we have been distressed for you cruelly; we have had a man here who has plagued Mr. Harrel to death, and we wanted you sadly to speak to him."

"I should have been very glad," said Mr. Arnott, "to have been of any use, and perhaps it is not yet too late; who is the man?"

"O," cried Mr. Harrel, carelessly, "only a fellow from that rascally taylor who has been so troublesome to me lately. He has had the impudence, because I did not pay him the moment he was pleased to want his money, to put the bill into the hands of one Reeves, a griping attorney, who has been here this evening, and thought proper to talk

to me pretty freely. I can tell the gentleman I shall not easily forget his impertinence! however I really wish mean time I could get rid of him."

"How much is the bill, Sir?" said Mr. Arnott?

"Why it's rather a round sum; but I don't know how it is, one's bills mount up before one is aware: those fellows charge such confounded sums for tape and buckram; I hardly know what I have had of him, and yet he has run me up a bill of between three and four hundred pounds."

Here there was a general silence; till Mrs. Harrel said, "Brother, can't you be so good as to lend us the money? Mr. Harrel says he can pay it again very soon."

"O yes, very soon," said Mr. Harrel, "for I shall receive a great deal of money in a little time; I only want to stop this fellow's mouth for the present."

"Suppose I go and talk with him?" said Mr. Arnott.

"O, he's a brute, a stock!" cried Mr. Harrel; "nothing but the money will satisfy him: he will hear no reason; one might as well talk to a stone."

Mr. Arnott now looked extremely distressed; but upon his sister's warmly pressing him not to lose any time, he gently said, "If this person will but wait a week or two, I should be extremely glad, for really just

now

now I cannot take up so much money without such particular loss and inconvenience, that I hardly know how to do it;—but yet, if he will not be appeased, he must certainly have it."

"Appeased?" cried Mr. Harrel, "you might as well appease the sea in a storm! he is as hard as iron."

Mr. Arnott, then forcing a smile, though evidently in much uneasiness, said he would not fail to raise the money the next morning, and was taking his leave; when Cecilia, shocked that such tenderness and good-nature should be thus grossly imposed upon, hastily begged to speak with Mrs. Harrel, and taking her into another room, said, "I beseech you, my dear friend, let not your worthy brother suffer by his generosity; permit me in the present exigence to assist Mr. Harrel: my having such a sum advanced can be of no consequence; but I should grieve indeed that your brother, who so nobly understands the use of money, should take it up at any particular disadvantage."

"You are vastly kind," said Mrs. Harrel, "and I will run and speak to them about it: but which ever of you lends the money, Mr. Harrel has assured me he shall pay it very soon."

She then returned with the proposition. Mr. Arnott strongly opposed it, but Mr. Harrell seemed rather to prefer it, yet spoke

so confidently of his speedy payment, that he appeared to think it a matter of little importance from which he accepted it. A generous contest ensued between Mr. Arnott and Cecilia; but as she was very earnest, she at length prevailed, and settled to go herself the next morning into the city, in order to have the money advanced by Mr. Briggs, who had the management of her fortune entirely to himself, her other guardians never interfering in the executive part of her affairs.

This arranged, they all retired.

And then, with increasing astonishment, Cecilia reflected upon the ruinous levity of Mr. Harrel, and the blind security of his wife; she saw in their situation danger the most alarming, and in the behaviour of Mr. Harrel selfishness the most inexcusable; such glaring injustice to his creditors, such utter insensbility to his friends, took from her all wish of assisting him, though the indignant compassion with which she saw the easy generosity of Mr. Arnott so frequently abused, had now, for his sake merely, induced her to relieve him.

She resolved, however, as soon as the present difficulty was surmounted, to make another attempt to open the eyes of Mrs. Harrel to the evils which so apparently threatened her, and press her to exert all her influence with her husband, by means both of

of example and advice, to retrench his expences, before it should be absolutely too late to save him from ruin.

She determined also, at the same time that she applied for the money requisite for this debt, to take up enough for discharging her own bill at the bookseller's, and putting in execution her plan of assisting the Hills.

The next morning she arose early, and, attended by her servant, set out for the house of Mr. Briggs, purposing, as the weather was clear and frosty, to walk through Oxford-Road, and then put herself into a chair; and hoping to return to Mr. Harrel's by the usual hour of breakfast.

She had not proceeded far, before she saw a mob gathering, and the windows of almost all the houses filling with spectators. She desired her servant to enquire what this meant, and was informed that the people were assembling to see some malefactors pass by in their way to Tyburn.

Alarmed at this intelligence from the fear of meeting the unhappy criminals, she hastily turned down the next street, but found that also filling with people, who were running to the scene she was trying to avoid: encircled thus every way, she applied to a maid servant who was standing at the door of a large house, and begged leave to step in till the mob was gone by. The maid immediately

diately consented, and she waited here while she sent her man for a chair.

He soon arrived with one; but just as she returned to the street door, a gentleman, who was hastily entering the house, standing back to let her pass, suddenly exclaimed, "Miss Beverley!" and looking at him, she perceived young Delvile.

"I cannot stop an instant," cried she, running down the steps, "lest the crowd should prevent the chair from going on."

"Will you not first," said he, handing her in, "tell me what news you have heard?"

"News!" repeated she, "No, I have heard none."

"You will only, then, laugh at me for those officious offers you did so well to reject?"

"I know not what offers you mean!"

"They were indeed superfluous, and therefore I wonder not you have forgotten them. Shall I tell the chairmen whither to go?"

"To Mr. Briggs. But I cannot imagine what you mean."

"To Mr. Briggs!" repeated he; "O live for ever French beads and Bristol stones! fresh offers may perhaps be made there, impertinent, officious, and useless as mine!"

He then told her servant the direction, and, making his bow, went into the house she had just quitted.

Cecilia, extremely amazed by this short, but unintelligible conversation, would again have called upon him to explain his meaning, but found the crowd increasing so fast, that she could not venture to detain the chair, which with difficulty made its way to the adjoining streets: but her surprize at what had passed so entirely occupied her, that when she stopt at the house of Mr. Briggs, she had almost forgotten what had brought her thither.

The foot-boy, who came to the door, told her that his master was at home, but not well.

She desired he might be acquainted that she wished to speak to him upon business, and would wait upon him again at any hour when he thought he should be able to see her.

The boy returned with an answer that she might call again the next week.

Cecilia, knowing that so long a delay would destroy all the kindness of her intention, determined to write to him for the money, and therefore went into the parlour, and desired to have pen and ink.

The boy, after making her wait some time in a room without any fire, brought her a pen and a little ink in a broken tea cup, saying, "Master begs you won't spirt it about, for he's got no more; and all our blacking's as good as gone."

"Black-

"Blacking?" repeated Cecilia?

"Yes, Miss; when master's shoes are blacked, we commonly gets a little drap of fresh ink."

Cecilia promised to be careful, but desired him to fetch her a sheet of paper.

"Law, Miss," cried the boy, with a grin, "I dare say master'd as soon give you a bit of his nose! howsever I'll go ax."

In a few minutes he again returned, and brought in his hand a slate and a pencil: "Miss," cried he, "Master says how you may write upon this, for he supposes you've no great matters to say."

Cecilia, much astonished at this extreme parsimony, was obliged to consent; but as the point of the pencil was very blunt, desired the boy to get her a knife, that she might cut it. He obeyed, but said, "Pray, Miss, take care it ben't known, for master don't do such a thing once in a year, and if he know'd I'd got you the knife, he'd go nigh to give me a good polt of the head."

Cecilia then wrote upon the slate her desire to be informed in what manner she should send him her receipt for 600l. which she begged to have instantly advanced.

The boy came back grinning, and holding up his hands, and said, "Miss, there's a fine piece of work up stairs! Master's in a peck of troubles; but he says how he'll come down,

down, if you'll stay till he's got his things on."

"Does he keep his bed, then? I hope I have not made him rise?"

"No, Miss, he don't keep his bed, only he must get ready, for he wears no great matters of cloaths when he's alone. You are to know, Miss," lowering his voice, "that that day as he went abroad with our sweep's cloath's on, he comed home in such a pickle you never see! I believe somebody'd knock'd him in the kennel; so does Moll; but don't you say as I teld you! He's been special bad ever since. Moll and I was as glad as could be, because he's so plaugy sharp; for, to let you know, Miss, he's so near, it's partly a wonder how he lives at all: and yet he's worth a power of money, too."

"Well, well," said Cecilia, not very desirous to encourage his forwardness, "if I want any thing, I'll call for you."

The boy, however, glad to tell his tale, went on.

"Our Moll won't stay with him above a week longer, Miss, because she says how she can't get nothing to eat, but just some old stinking salt meat, that's stayed in the butcher's shop so long, it would make a horse sick to look at it. But Moll's pretty nice; howsever, Miss, to let you know, we don't get a good meal so often as once a quarter!

why

why this last week we han't had nothing at all but some dry musty red herrings; so you may think, Miss, we're kept pretty sharp!"

He was now interrupted by hearing Mr. Briggs coming down the stairs, upon which, abruptly breaking off his complaints, he held up his finger to his nose in token of secrecy, and ran hastily into the kitchen.

The appearance of Mr. Briggs was by no means rendered more attractive by illness and negligence of dress. He had on a flannel gown and night cap; his black beard, of many days growth, was long and grim, and upon his nose and one of his cheeks was a large patch of brown paper, which, as he entered the room, he held on with both his hands.

Cecilia made many apologies for having disturbed him, and some civil enquiries concerning his health.

"Ay, ay," cried he pettishly, "bad enough; all along of that trumpery masquerade; wish I had not gone! Fool for my pains."

"When were you taken ill, Sir?"

"Met with an accident; got a fall, broke my head, like to have lost my wig. Wish the masquerade at old Nick! thought it would cost nothing, or would not have gone. Warrant sha'n't get me so soon to another!"

"Did you fall in going home, Sir?"

"Ay, ay, plump in the kennel; could hardly

hardly get out of it; felt myself a going, was afraid to tear my clothes, knew the rascal would make me pay for them, so by holding up the old sack, came bolt on my face; off pops my wig; could not tell what to do; all as dark as pitch!"

"Did not you call for help?"

"Nobody by but scrubs, knew they would not help for nothing. Scrawled out as I could, groped about for my wig, found it at last, all soused in the mud; stuck to my head like Turner's cerate."

"I hope, then, you got into an hackney coach?"

"What for? to make things worse? was not bad enough, hay?—must pay two shillings beside?"

"But how did you find yourself when you got home, Sir?"

"How? why wet as muck; my head all bumps, my cheek all cut, my nose big as two! forced to wear a plaister; half ruined in vinegar. Got a great cold: put me in a fever; never been well since."

"But have you had no advice, Sir? should not you send for a physician?"

"What to do, hay? fill me with jallop? can get it myself, can't I? Had one once; was taken very bad, thought should have popt off; began to flinch, sent for the doctor, proved nothing but a cheat! cost me a guinea, gave it at fourth visit, and he never

came

came again! —— warrant won't have no more?"

Then perceiving upon the table some dust from the pencil, "What's here?" cried he, angrily, "who's been cutting the pencil? wish they were hanged; suppose it's the boy; deserves to be horse-whipped: give him a good banging."

Cecilia immediately cleared him, by acknowledging she had herself been the culprit.

"Ay, ay," cried he, "thought as much all the time! guessed how it was; nothing but ruin and waste; sending for money, nobody knows why; wanting 600*l.*—what to do? throw it in the dirt? Never heard the like! Sha'n't have it, promise you that," nodding his head, "sha'n't have no such thing!"

"Sha'n't have it?" cried Cecilia, much surprised, "why not, Sir?"

"Keep it for your husband; get you one soon: won't have no juggling. Don't be in a hurry; one in my eye."

Cecilia then began a very earnest expostulation, assuring him she really wanted the money, for an occasion which would not admit of delay.

Her remonstrances, however, he wholly disregarded, telling her that girls knew nothing of the value of money, and ought not to be trusted with it; that he would not

hear

hear of such extravagance, and was resolved not to advance her a penny.

Cecilia was both provoked and confounded by a refusal so unexpected; and as she thought herself bound in honour to Mr. Harrel not to make known the motive of her urgency, she was for some time totally silenced: till recollecting her account with the bookseller, she determined to rest her plea upon that, persuaded that he could not, at least, deny her money to pay her own bills.

He heard her, however, with the utmost contempt; "Books?" he cried, "what do you want with books? do no good; all lost time; words get no cash."

She informed him his admonitions were now too late, as she had already received them, and must therefore necessarily pay for them.

"No, no," cried he, "send 'em back, that's best; keep no such rubbish, won't turn to account; do better without 'em."

"That, Sir, will be impossible, for I have had them some time, and cannot expect the bookseller to take them again."

"Must, must," cried he, "can't help himself; glad to have 'em too. Are but a minor, can't be made pay a farthing."

Cecilia with much indignation heard such fraud recommended, and told him she could by no means consent to follow his advice.

But

But she soon found, to her utter amazement, that he steadily refused to give her any other, or to bestow the slightest attention upon her expostulations, sturdily saying that her uncle had left her a noble estate, and he would take care to see it put in proper hands, by getting her a good and careful husband.

"I have no intention, no wish, Sir," cried she, "to break into the income or estate left me by my uncle; on the contrary, I hold them sacred, and think myself bound in conscience never to live beyond them: but the 10,000*l.* bequeathed me by my father, I regard as more peculiarly my own property, and therefore I think myself at liberty to dispose of it as I please."

"What," cried he in a rage, "make it over to a scrubby bookseller! give it up for an old pot-hook? no, no, won't suffer it; sha'n't be, sha'n't be, I say! If you want some books, go to Moorfields, pick up enough at an old stall; get 'em at two-pence a-piece; dear enough too."

Cecilia for some time hoped he was merely indulging his strange and sordid humour, by an opposition that was only intended to teaze her; but she soon found herself extremely mistaken; he was immoveable in obstinacy, as he was incorrigible in avarice; he neither troubled himself with enquiries nor reasoning, but was contented with refusing her as a child might

might be refused, by peremptorily telling her she did not know what she wanted, and therefore should not have what she asked.

And with this answer, after all that she could urge, she was compelled to leave the house, as he complained that his brown paper plaister wanted fresh dipping in vinegar, and he could stay talking no longer.

The disgust with which this behaviour filled her, was doubled by the shame and concern of returning to the Harrels with her promise unperformed; she deliberated upon every method that occurred to her of still endeavouring to serve them, but could suggest nothing, except trying to prevail upon Mr. Delvile to interfere in her favour. She liked not, indeed, the office of solicitation to so haughty a man, but, having no other expedient, her repugnance gave way to her generosity, and she ordered the chairmen to carry her to St. James's Square.

CHAPTER X.

A PERPLEXITY.

AND here, at the door of his father's house, and just ascending the steps, she perceived young Delvile.

"Again!" cried he, handing her out of the chair, "surely some good genius is at work for me this morning!"

She told him she should not have called so early, now she was acquainted with the late hours of Mrs. Delvile, but that she merely meant to speak with his father, for two minutes, upon business.

He attended her up stairs; and finding she was in haste, went himself with her message to Mr. Delvile: and soon returned with an answer, that he would wait upon her presently.

The strange speeches he had made to her when they first met in the morning, now recurring to her memory, she determined to have them explained, and in order to lead to the subject, mentioned the disagreeable situation in which he had found her, while she was standing up to avoid the sight of the condemned malefactors.

"Indeed!"

"Indeed!" cried he, in a tone of voice somewhat incredulous, "and was that the purpose for which you stood up?"

"Certainly, Sir;—what other could I have?"

"None, surely!" said he, smiling, "but the accident was singularly opportune."

"Opportune?" cried Cecilia, staring, "how opportune? this is the second time in the same morning that I am not able to understand you?"

"How *should* you understand what is so little intelligible?"

"I see you have some meaning which I cannot fathom, why, else, should it be so extraordinary that I should endeavour to avoid a mob? or how could it be opportune that I should happen to meet with one?"

He laughed at first without making any answer; but perceiving she looked at him with impatience, he, half gaily, half reproachfully, said, "Whence is it that young ladies, even such whose principles are most strict, seem universally, in those affairs where their affections are concerned, to think hypocrisy necessary, and deceit amiable? and hold it graceful to disavow to day, what they may perhaps mean publicly to acknowledge to-morrow?"

Cecilia, who heard these questions with unfeigned astonishment, looked at him with the utmost eagerness for an explanation.

"Do you so much wonder," he continued, "that I should have hoped in Miss Beverley to have seen some deviations from such rules? and have expected more openness and candour in a young lady who has given so noble a proof of the liberality of her mind and understanding?"

"You amaze me beyond measure!" cried she, "what rules, what candour, what liberality, do you mean?"

"Must I speak yet more plainly? and if I do, will you bear to hear me?"

"Indeed I should be extremely glad if you would give me leave to understand you."

"And may I tell you what has charmed me, as well as what I have presumed to wonder at?"

"You may tell me any thing, if you will but be less mysterious."

"Forgive then the frankness you invite, and let me acknowledge to you how greatly I honour the nobleness of your conduct. Surrounded as you are by the opulent and the splendid, unshackled by dependence, unrestrained by authority, bleſt by nature with all that is attractive, by situation with all that is desirable,—to slight the rich, and disregard the powerful, for the purer pleasure of raising oppressed merit, and giving to desert that wealth in which alone it seemed deficient—how can a spirit so liberal be sufficiently

ciently admired, or a choice of so much dignity be too highly extolled?"

"I find," cried Cecilia, "I must forbear any further enquiry, for the more I hear, the less I understand."

"Pardon me, then," cried he, "if here, I return to my first question; whence is it that a young lady, who can think so nobly, and act so disinterestedly, should not be uniformly great, simple in truth, and unaffected in sincerity? Why should she be thus guarded, where frankness would do her so much honour? Why blush in owning what all others may blush in envying?"

"Indeed you perplex me intolerably," cried Cecilia, with some vexation. "Why, Sir, will you not be more explicit?"

"And why, madam," returned he, with a laugh, "would you tempt me to be more impertinent? have I not said strange things already?"

"Strange indeed," cried she, "for not one of them can I comprehend!"

"Pardon, then," cried he, "and forget them all! I scarce know myself what urged me to say them, but I began inadvertently, without intending to go on, and I have proceeded involuntarily, without knowing how to stop. The fault, however, is ultimately your own, for the sight of you creates an insurmountable desire to converse with you,

and your conversation a propensity equally incorrigible to take some interest in your welfare."

He would then have changed the discourse, and Cecilia, ashamed of pressing him further, was for some time silent; but when one of the servants came to inform her that his master meant to wait upon her directly, her unwillingness to leave the matter in suspence, induced her, somewhat abruptly, to say, "Perhaps, Sir, you are thinking of Mr. Belfield?"

"A happy conjecture!" cried he, "but so wild a one, I cannot but marvel how it should occur to you!"

"Well, Sir," said she, "I must acknowledge I now understand your meaning; but with respect to what has given rise to it, I am as much a stranger as ever."

The entrance of Mr. Delvile here closed the conversation.

He began with his usual ostentatious apologies, declaring he had so many people to attend, so many complaints to hear, and so many grievances to redress, that it was impossible for him to wait upon her sooner, and not without difficulty that he waited upon her now.

Mean time his son almost immediately retired; and Cecilia, instead of listening to this harangue, was only disturbing herself with conjectures upon what had just passed.

She

She saw that young Delvile concluded she was absolutely engaged to Mr. Belfield, and though she was better pleased that any suspicion should fall there than upon Sir Robert Floyer, she was yet both provoked and concerned to be suspected at all. An attack so earnest from almost any other person, could hardly have failed being very offensive to her, but in the manners of young Delvile good breeding was so happily blended with frankness, that his freedom seemed merely to result from the openness of his disposition, and even in its very act pleaded its own excuse.

Her reverie was at length interrupted by Mr. Delvile's desiring to know in what he could serve her.

She told him she had present occasion for 600 *l.* and hoped he would not object to her taking up that sum.

"Six hundred pounds," said he, after some deliberation, "is rather an extraordinary demand for a young lady in your situation; your allowance is considerable, you have yet no house, no equipage, no establishment; your expences, I should imagine, cannot be very great—"

He stopt, and seemed weighing her request.

Cecilia, shocked at appearing extravagant, yet too generous to mention Mr. Harrel, had again recourse to her bookseller's bill, which

which she told him she was anxious to discharge.

"A bookseller's bill?" cried he; "and do you want 600*l.* for a bookseller's bill?"

"No, Sir," said she, stammering, "no —not all for that,—I have some other—I have a particular occasion——"

"But what bill at all," cried he, with much surprise, "can a young lady have with a bookseller? The Spectator, Tatler, and Guardian, would make library sufficient for any female in the kingdom; nor do I think it like a gentlewoman to have more. Besides, if you ally yourself in such a manner as I shall approve and recommend, you will, in all probability, find already collected more books than there can ever be any possible occasion for you to look into. And let me counsel you to remember, that a lady, whether so called from birth or only from fortune, should never degrade herself by being put on a level with writers, and such sort of people."

Cecilia thanked him for his advice, but confessed that upon the present occasion it came too late, as the books were now actually in her own possession.

"And have you taken," cried he, "such a measure as this without consulting me? I thought I had assured you, my opinion was always at your service when you were in any dilemma."

"Yes,

"Yes, Sir," answered Cecilia; "but I knew how much you were occupied, and wished to avoid taking up your time."

"I cannot blame your modesty," he replied, "and therefore as you have contracted the debt, you are, in honour, bound to pay it. Mr. Briggs, however, has the entire management of your fortune, my many avocations obliging me to decline so laborious a trust; apply, therefore, to him, and, as things are situated, I will make no opposition to your demand."

"I have already, Sir," said Cecilia, "spoke to Mr. Briggs, but——"

"You went to him first, then?" interrupted Mr. Delvile, with a look of much displeasure.

"I was unwilling, Sir, to trouble you till I found it unavoidable," she then acquainted him with Mr. Briggs's refusal, and entreated he would do her the favour to intercede in her behalf, that the money might no longer be denied her.

Every word she spoke, his pride seemed rising to resent, and when she had done, after regarding her some time with apparent indignation, he said, "*I* intercede! *I* become an agent!"

Cecilia, amazed to find him thus violently irritated, made a very earnest apology for her request; but, without paying her any attention, he walked up and down the room, exclaiming,

claiming, "an agent! and to Mr. Briggs! —This is an affront I could never have expected! why did I degrade myself by accepting this humiliating office! I ought to have known better!" Then, turning to Cecilia, "Child," he added, "for whom is it you take me, and for what?"

Cecilia again, though affronted in her turn, began some protestations of respect; but haughtily interrupting her, he said, "If of me, and of my rank in life, you judge by Mr. Briggs or by Mr. Harrel, I may be subject to proposals such as these every day; suffer me, therefore, for your better information to hint to you, that the head of an ancient and honourable house, is apt to think himself somewhat superior to people but just rising from dust and obscurity."

Thunderstruck by this imperious reproof, she could attempt no further vindication; but when he observed her consternation, he was somewhat appeased, and hoping he had now impressed her with a proper sense of his dignity, he more gently said, "You did not, I believe, intend to insult me."

"Good Heaven, Sir; no!" cried Cecilia, "nothing was more distant from my thoughts; if my expressions have been faulty, it has been wholly from ignorance."

"Well, well, we will think then no more of it."

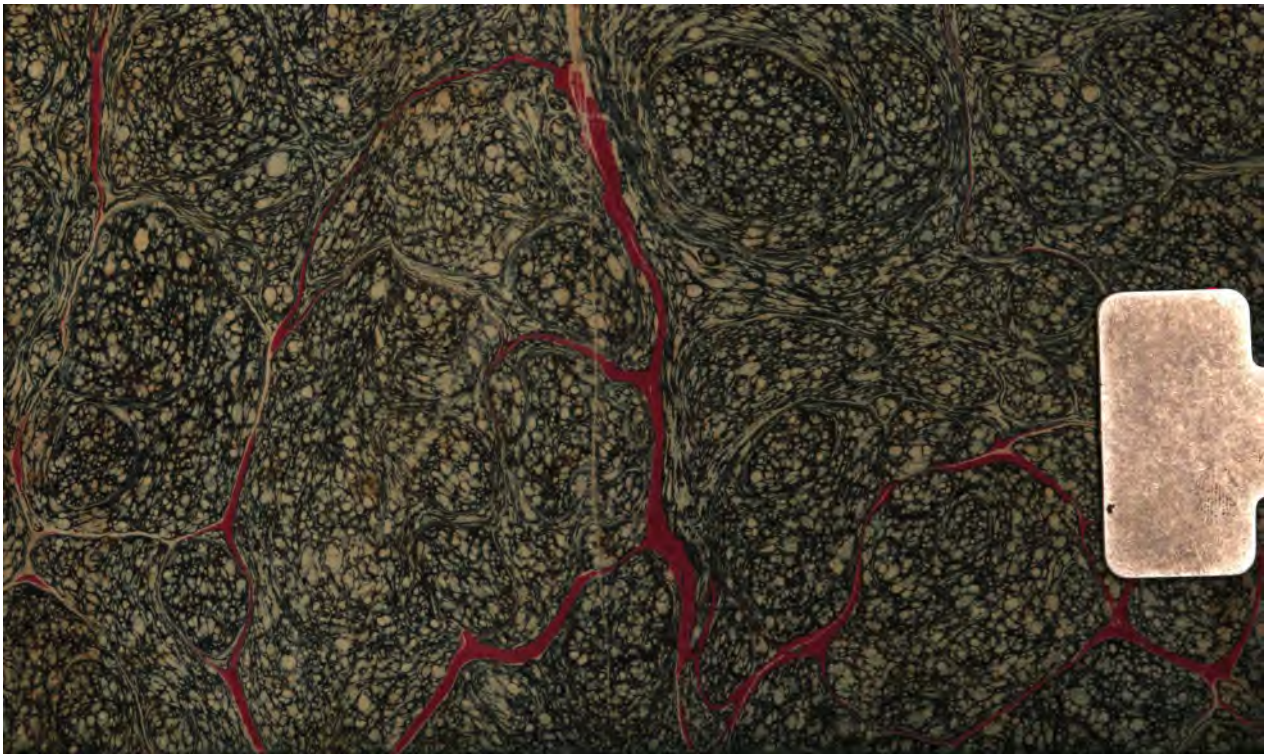
She then said she would no longer detain him,

him, and, without daring to again mention her petition, she wished him good morning.

He suffered her to go, yet, as she left the room, graciously said, "Think no more of my displeasure, for it is over: I see you were not aware of the extraordinary thing you proposed. I am sorry I cannot possibly assist you; on any other occasion you may depend upon my services: but you know Mr. Briggs, you have seen him yourself—judge, then, how a man of any fashion is to accommodate himself with such a person!"

Cecilia concurred, and courtsying took her leave.

"Ah! thought she, in her way home, how happy is it for me that I followed the advice of Mr. Monckton! else I had surely made interest to become an inmate of that house, and then, indeed, as he wisely foresaw, I should inevitably have been overwhelmed by this pompous insolence. No family, however amiable, could make amends for such a master of it."

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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